## TAUNTON'S FINE AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 1996 NO. 16

How to Grill Tex-Mex Style

New Ideas for Potato Salads

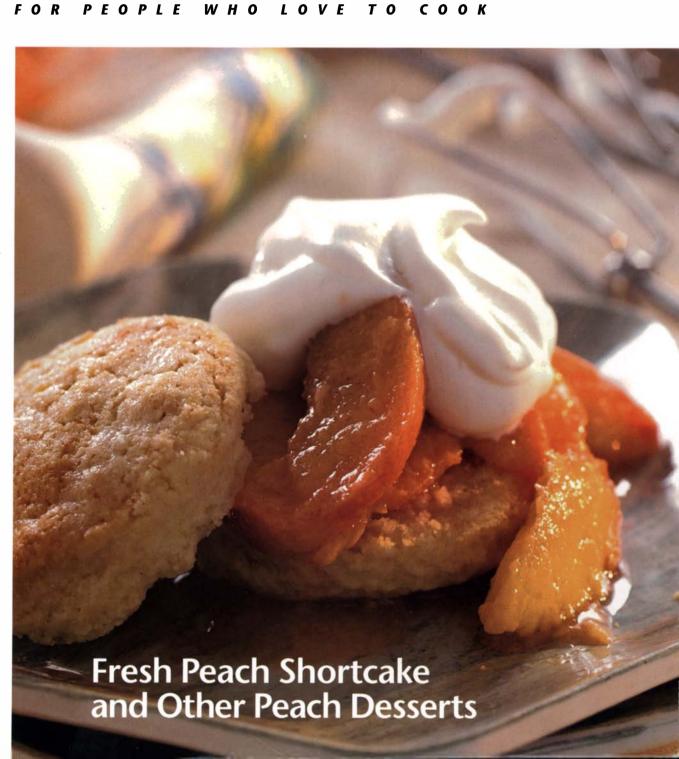
Zucchini at Its Flavorful Best

Zesty Homemade Ketchup

Professional-Style Ranges

Making Rustic Rosemary Flatbread





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continue

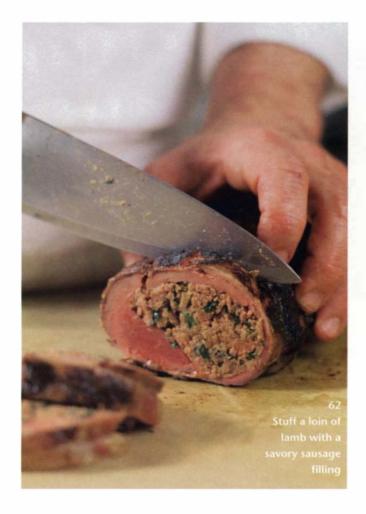
to offer your family



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On the cover: Peaches with Dried-Cherry Shortcake, "Taste Summer's Sweetness in Peach Desserts," p. 48.

Cover photo, Mark Thomas.

These pages: top left, Todd Bryant; bottom left, Ben Fink; above, Alan Richardson; below: Scott Phillips (top and bottom right) and Kathryn Kleinman (bottom left).



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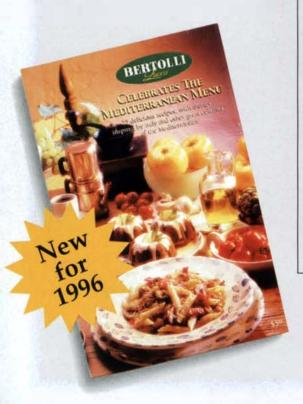
3 Tbsp. Bertolli Extra Virgin Olive Oil 2 Tbsp. chopped walnuts

1 Tosp, mild red wine vinegor (or fresh lemon juice) 1/8 tsp. soft Freshly ground black pepper to taste 6 cups torn mixed salad greens (select at least 3: arugula, radicchio, curly endive, romaine) 1/2 cup thin strips yellow or orange bell pepper 1/2 cup finely sliced, trimmed fresh fennel, when in season

Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese for shaving over the salad (Optional)

Combine the olive oil and walnuts in a small skillet. Heat, stirring over very low heat just until walnuts are warm. Remove from the heat. Stir in the vinegar or lemon juice, salt and pepper.
 Combine the salad greens with the bell pepper and fennel (if available) in a salad bowl. Add the walnut dressing and toss the salad well. Divide the salad among four plates.

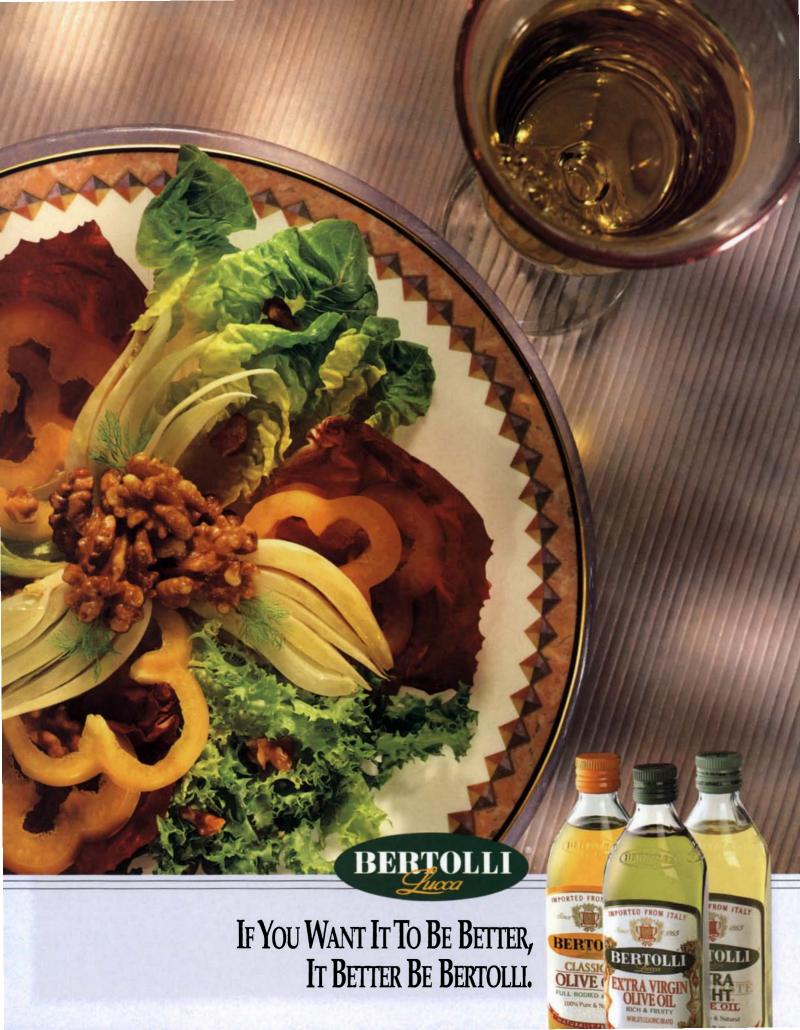
Optional, using a vegetable peeler, peel wide strips of the Parmigiano-Reggiano over each salad. Garnish with additional walnut pieces. Serves 4.





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### Paper or plastic: the debate continues

I couldn't pass up the opportunity to join the debate on the use of disposable zip-top plastic bags in the past few issues of Fine Cooking. A comparison of paper and plastic shows that each is similar in its degree of environmental harm, though in different ways. What people don't consider about plastic is that even though it's made from crude oil, the oil isn't being extracted to make plastic bags; it's being extracted to make fuel. Plastic is a byproduct of the waste from making fuel. In a way, you can say that plastic is good, as it makes use of what would otherwise have to be disposed of.

But no matter how you look at it, plastic can't follow

the natural, renewable cycle of the earth the way paper can. It took millions of years for the earth to produce the oil from which plastic is made, and there's no way a plastic bag will turn back into oil when you put it back into the earth. But with proper management, trees can be a never-ending renewable resource, and paper returned to the earth does biodegrade.

For this reason, paper is superior to plastic.

I've concluded that as long as plastic bags are being made from waste, we might as well use them when they're the best tool for the job. But we need to move towards using products that are made from renewable, biodegradable materials.

—Debra Dadd-Redalia, author, Sustaining the Earth (Morrow, 1994)

### **Great garlic gadget**

Regarding Susan Asanovic's advice to Americans to stop depending on gadgets to peel garlic (*Fine Cooking #14*, p. 6), I'd say Ms. Asanovic is a little tightly wound. I use a lot of garlic, and I've mainly used the smash-with-the-flat-side-of-a-knife method for peeling, which I found it to be tedious.

I tried the E-Z-Rol that was reviewed in *Fine Cooking* #12, p. 18. I put in three cloves, rolled it, and out popped perfectly naked cloves, intact, ready for mincing, slicing, or roasting. I love it. And it takes up less room than the brick Ms. Asanovic suggested.

How about an Internet address?

—Debora Buccieri Minneapolis, MN

Editors' note: You can reach us at our new Internet address: finecook@taunton.com.

### **Understanding eggs**

Everyone I work with loves my Italian cream cake, but I was unhappy with it because the middle would fall a little. The frosting covered it, so I was the only one who knew. When I read "The Amazing Culinary Powers of Eggs" (Fine Cooking #14, p. 76), I learned what the problem was. When I made the cake last week, I didn't whip all the whites separately as the recipe instructs. Instead, I put three whole eggs and two yolks in the batter. I beat the remaining two whites separately and folded them into the batter to lighten it. The cake didn't fall at all, but rose up evenly in the pan and stayed that way. Thank you very much.

—Mary Boyles, Columbia, SC ◆

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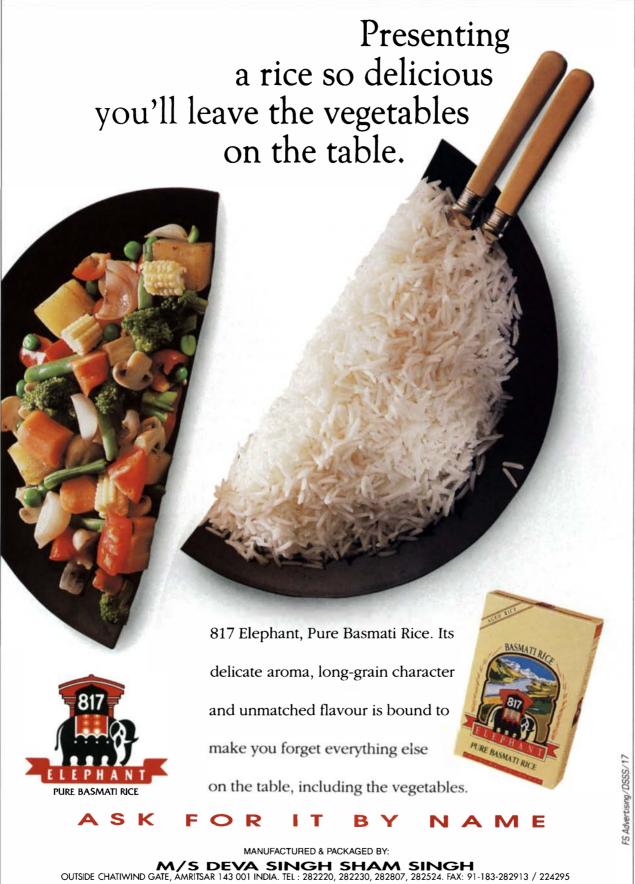
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Have a question of general interest about cooking?

Send it to *Fine Cooking*,

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06470-5506, and we'll try to find a cooking professional with the answer.

### Why does a baker need salt?

Why do most of my baking recipes ask for the addition of ½ to 1 teaspoon of salt? Since I try to keep my salt intake to a minimum, I'm always torn about whether to add the salt or not. Is it a necessary catalyst to the baking process? Does it bring out flavor? Or could I do without it?

—Violet Devries, San Diego, CA

Tom McMahon replies:
Salt's primary role in baking is to give flavor; however, it also has an important and complex effect on doughs, especially on gluten structure. Elimi-

Salt helps baked goods spring up as they bake.

nating or altering the amount of salt in a recipe has its most marked effect in breads and other yeast-raised items.

Salt helps the glutens in flour bond more tightly. It's these bonds that trap gases produced by the yeast. A salted dough rises more slowly but is less slack and thus higher rising. A dough with less salt will tend to spread more (especially if it isn't baked in a pan or form), thus limiting its potential to spring up as it bakes.

Salt in baking is used in much lower proportion to other ingredients and with a lot less room for variation than in cooking. In breads, for example, the usual amount of salt is equal to 2% of the weight of the flour; variation above or below that amount is quickly apparent in the taste of the finished bread.

Since salt means cookies, cakes, and bread that are long on flavor, using the small amount the recipe calls for is well worth it.

Tom McMahon is the executive director of the Bread Baker's Guild of America. He is also the project director of the National Baking Center at the Dunwoody Institute in Minneapolis.

### Choosing an extravirgin olive oil

There are so many extravirgin olive oils out there.

How do I choose a good one?

—Meg Perry,

Broadview Heights, OH

### Maggie Blyth Klein replies:

Not all extra-virgin olive oils are created equal. The very best of the imported oils use olives that were grown on the same estate as the mill where they were pressed. Such oils are often labeled something like prodotto nel frantoio ("produced at the olive mill"). But when I see the words "bottled by," I tend to infer that the olives were grown and pressed somewhere other than at the estate. A well-chosen blend of oils from other areas might be an enjoyable, high-quality oil, or it might not be up to the standard of the bottler's region. Italian law allows any oil bottled in Italy to be labeled "product of Italy," even if the oil comes from another country. This isn't necessarily bad, but expect to pay less for such an oil, and expect it to be unexceptional in quality.

You can deduce a lot by the price. If you're paying as little as \$9 a quart for extra-virgin olive oil, it cannot possibly be

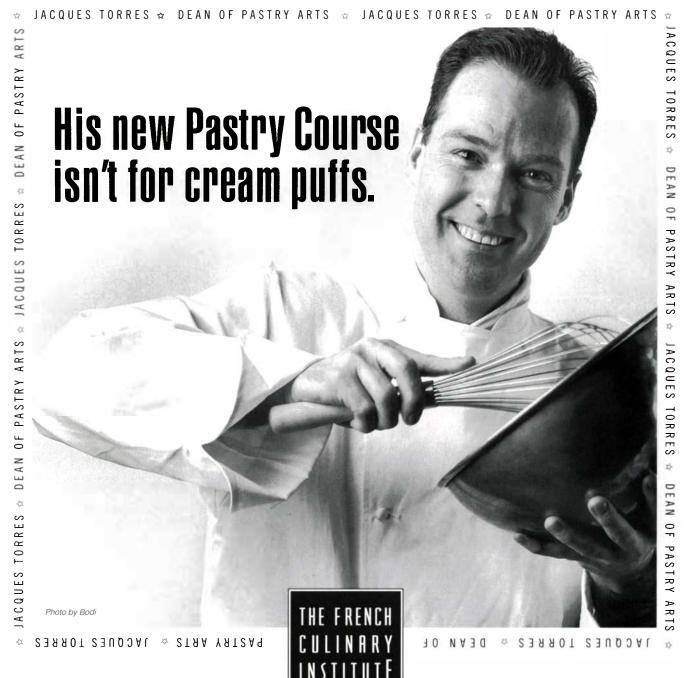
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first-rate. To be sold here at that price, the olives can't be the variety that produces the most complex and fruity oils, picked by hand, carefully handled, and processed in a clean, mechanical mill.

The most expensive extravirgin oil isn't necessarily the best, however. An oil's quality has a lot to do with how old it is and how it has been stored. Oil doesn't deteriorate rapidly, but younger is better. Unfortunately, most producers don't date their oils.

A final tip: don't buy any oil that has a hint of copper color—that indicates oxidation caused by storing the oil in sunlight.

Maggie Blyth Klein, author of The Feast of the Olive (Chronicle, 1983), is a co-owner of Oliveto, a restaurant in Oakland, California.

### Gadgets that grab garlic odor

I've heard about a product that removes garlic odor from your hands. It's a small block of metal that you rub between your hands. How can I find it, and why does it work?

—Norman Lee, San Francisco, CA

Nancy Pollard and Shirley O. Corriber reply: There are a

couple of these products that we've run across, the Cajun Smart Bar and the Nonion, either of which you can find at a good kitchen-supply store. Both do a decent job at removing smells left by the odorcausing sulfur compounds found in onions and garlic.

The manufacturers claim that a stainless-steel alloy floats molecules on the bar's surface and that there's a greater attraction between that surface and the sulfur compounds than there is between your skin and those compounds. Rubbing your hands on a stainless-steel sink works, too. (For information on the Nonion, call 5K Enterprises, 412/443-1377; for the Cajun Smart Bar, write to Oenophilia, PO Box 17115, Chapel Hill, NC 27516-7115.)

This rule of attraction sounds plausible, but we've found no hard-core scientific explanation for it. Julia Child's method of rubbing a table-spoon of salt between your palms and rinsing is effective, as is good old soap and water. Nancy Pollard owns La Cuisine, a kitchen-supply store in Alexandria, Virginia. Shirley Corriher teaches food science and cooking classes and is a contributing editor for Fine Cooking.



Rubbing a metal bar removes garlic odor from your hands.

### Smoothing gumbo

When I make gumbo, sometimes the roux doesn't incorporate into the stock. Why would this happen?

> —Paul Dudenhefer, Blacksburg, VA

Jamie Shannon replies: Roux (fat and flour cooked over heat) has a special role in gumbo. While it's usually used to thicken soups and sauces, in gumbo roux is used more as a flavor enhancer than as a thickener. Having said that, a well-incorporated roux is key to good gumbo. If you have a resistant roux, there are several solutions.

Many Cajun recipes start with the instruction "First, make a roux." This is especially important when making gumbo. Roux is the base to which all the other ingredients are added. Make it first, directly in the gumbo pot, and add the vegetables and stock to it. Never attempt to add the roux to the stock: it will clump and float like little dumplings.

Don't burn the roux. When you cook roux for a gumbo, keep the heat high and stir the roux constantly. The high heat creates the flavor and dark color a gumbo needs, but if the roux goes from mahogany to black, it's burned and there's no saving it. It will leave flakes and specks in your gumbo, as well as a bitter flavor.

Keep the pot hot. When the roux is done and you're ready to add the vegetables, don't turn down the heat. Add the vegetables (this will reduce the temperature of the roux), followed by the liquid. The vegetables need high heat to caramelize, and the heat also helps the roux incorporate with the vegetables and finally into the gumbo liquid.

After the roux is incorporated into the stock and everything's in the pot, let the gumbo simmer a long time and skim it frequently. This will give you thick and flavorful gumbo. If it still isn't thick enough, add a touch of filé powder.

Jamie Shannon is the executive chef at Commander's Palace in New Orleans.

### The facts on feta

Should feta cheese be creamy or crumbly? Does texture have anything to do with freshness? Does feta always come from sheep milk?

—Kevin Atwood, Burleson, TX

The Cheesemakers of Chicory Farm reply: Feta is the most common example of brine-aged cheeses, which are submerged in salt water for days, weeks, or even months before sale. The consistency of brine-aged cheese relates to the length of time it has aged in brine. Cheeses that have remained in the water longer are softer and creamier, while those aged for a shorter time are crumbly. Longer-aged cheeses are just as "fresh" as younger ones, since the salt brine inhibits spoiling. Younger brine-aged cheeses have a simpler, milkier, less fermented flavor.

Feta can be made from sheep, cow, or goat milk. The original Greek feta was probably made from pure sheep or goat milk, or a blend of the two. Countries outside of Greece—the United States, Israel, and France, to name a few—all produce high-quality feta cheese made from all three milks.

The Cheesemakers of Chicory Farm produce fine Europeanstyle farmstead cheeses in Mt. Hermon, Louisiana. ◆

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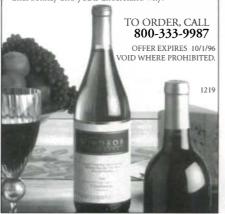
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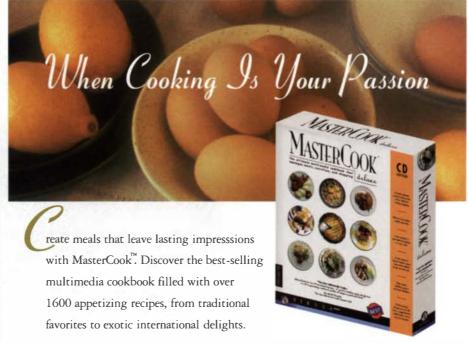
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## Choosing and Using Varieties of Eggplant

ot so long ago, when you went shopping for eggplant there was only one kind: the familiar dark-purple, pearshaped vegetable known as Western eggplant. Today, wellstocked produce markets offer eggplant in colors that range from jet black to pale ivory, with shades of purple, pink, and even green stripes in between. Some eggplant may be the size of a small watermelon, others no bigger than a marble. And alongside the familiar pear-shaped ones, you'll find eggplant that are long and thin, fat and squat, and others that are perfect ovals.

No matter which type of eggplant you buy, choose one that's firm to the touch. If you press gently on the flesh of a ripe eggplant, it will bounce back. If a dent remains, the eggplant is old. Compare eggplant of the same size and choose the heaviest one. Purple eggplant should have a glossy skin; white eggplant should show no hint of yellow—a sign of age.

An eggplant at its peakwon't stay that way for long. As an eggplant grows old, its skin begins to wrinkle and its flesh turns from firm to flabby. If you must

keep one for more than a day or two, put it in a plastic bag and store it in a cool (not cold) spot. Eggplant deteriorate quickly in both hot and cold temperatures. Although eggplant are available yearround, they're at their best from mid- to late-summer.

To peel or not to peel is a matter of preference. Some people like the taste and texture of the skin, others find it unpleasant. Most agree, however, that the thick, tough skin of white eggplant is best discarded.

Cooks are also divided on the issue of salting eggplant before cooking to purge some of its juices. Some claim that salting makes eggplant



The large, purple Western

**eggplant** is the one most often found in American

markets.







less bitter; others say it's a waste of time. If you're frying eggplant or using it in a recipe that includes a lot of oil, a preliminary salting may prevent the eggplant from absorbing too much of the fat. If you do choose to salt your eggplant, be sure to rinse it before cooking; otherwise, your dish is likely to be unpalatably salty.

Press gently on the flesh of a ripe eggplant and it will bounce back.

A good match for strong

seasonings. Eggplant's rela-

tivelybland taste and rich tex-

ture provide a fine backdrop

for assertive flavors like garlic,

chile peppers, and lamb. In its native Asia, you'll find eggplant in Japanese tempuras, Chinese stir-fries, and Southeast Asian curries. In Provence, eggplant is essential to the vegetable stew ratatouille. Cooks in Lebanon purée roasted eggplant to make the spread known as baba ghanouj, while Italian restaurants all over America have built their reputations on eggplant parmigiana.

However you prepare eggplant, be sure you cook it thoroughly. Few foods are as unpleasant to eat as spongy, undercooked eggplant.

Jeff Dawson is the garden director for the Kendall Jackson Winery in Santa Rosa, California. ◆



Italian eggplant are small, dark, and round or pear shaped. Their skin is more tender and their flesh more delicate than the larger Western eggplant.



AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 1996



Tortillas from Maria & Ricardo's Tortilla Factory can be made from flour, whole wheat, white corn, and blue corn.

inding good tortillas east of the Mississippi is no easy feat, so I was delighted to discover the mail-order tortillas from Maria & Ricardo's Tortilla Factory in Boston. The fresh aroma of the tortillas struck me as soon as I opened the box. When I pulled the tortillas out of their resealable bags, they felt light and supple—not heavy and stuck together, which can be a sign that tortillas are weeks old.

Cooking with these tortillas is a pleasure. The corn tortillas don't fall apart, and their flavor comes through

even when moistened with hot oil, dipped in a mole verde sauce, and rolled up with shredded chicken and aged Monterey Jack.

The success of the tortillas, as well as that of the 10-year-old company, is due to the owners' devotion to traditional Mexican methods for making authentic tortillas. The masa for their white corn tortillas is made fresh daily by stone-grinding white dent corn that's been cooked and soaked in limewater. The lime softens and dislodges the hard-to-digest kernels from the hulls. Many tortilla manufacturers in this country cut corners by using masa harina, an instant dehydrated mix made from masa. Although I've used this mix at home to make adequate tortillas, Maria & Ricardo's tortillas are more tender, puff up higher, and have a deeper corn flavor.

The flour tortillas are just as impressive as the corn. Heated on a flat grill, they gently toasted on the outside, while the inner layers stayed moist, almost melting in my mouth. Their flavor held up to a southwestern green chile stew as my family used the tortillas to sop up every last drop. The company also makes whole-wheat flour tortillas, with a sweet, nutty flavor that's quite addictive, and blue corn tortillas, which I also liked.

Maria & Ricardo's tortillas contain no preservatives or cholesterol, are low in sodium, and are kosher. They come in many sizes and may be frozen for up to two months. A package of twelve corn tortillas costs \$1.29, and ten flour tortillas are \$1.99 (plus shipping and handling.) My advice is to order a few packages and freeze some so you always have these great tortillas on hand. The company also sells fresh masa. For more information or to place an order, call the Harbor Corp. at 800/881-7040.

Liz Dobbs has cooked in various restaurants in New York City. Currently, she consults for a Mexican restaurant in her home town of Sag Harbor, New York.

### but those who bake often will certainly get their money's worth. The Giant Spatula is available from The King Arthur Flour Baker's Catalogue (800/827-6836). Judith Sutton, a food writer

however, it's a bit of a luxury.

based in New York City, has worked as a cook and pastry chef at several Manhattan restaurants.

### Giant spatula for big jobs

When I tried out this new oversized spatula from The King Arthur Flour Baker's Catalogue, I learned that sometimes bigger is indeed better. With a 10-inch-square aluminum blade set into a plastic handle, the spatula is handy for moving cookies—a half dozen or more at a time—to cooling racks. It also makes moving a glazed cake from its wire rack much easier. But I found it most useful when making pie crusts. I can lift up the whole crust, center it over my pie pan, and just slide it off.

If the spatula cost \$10 or less, I'd recommend it to anyone who has ever turned out a batch of cookies. At \$17.25,

### **James Beard** restaurant picks

Since 1986, when the James Beard Foundation opened its doors, some of the finest chefs have passed through the Beard House kitchen, preparing memorable meals that showcase their talents. Now the Beard Foundation has compiled a restaurant guide so the rest of us can seek out these same chefs and sample their culinary prowess.

The James Beard Foundation Restaurant Guide contains more than 600 in-depth restaurant listings, each providing the chef's name as well as his or her signature dishes. Subtitled. "An Insider's Guide to America's Most Celebrated Culinary Talents," the 166-

> page directory also includes some restaurants outside the United States.

The guide is available by mail and costs \$10, plus tax, shipping, and handling. To order, call the James Beard Foundation, 212/675-4984.

Joanne Smart is an associate editor for Fine Cooking. •

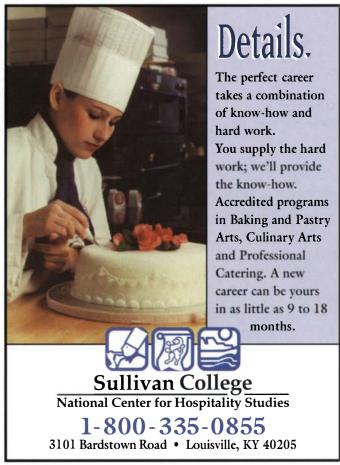


makes transferring dough easier.

FINE COOKING 16







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### Turning Out a Rolled Omelet

A rolled omelet is a perfect example of how a little technique and care can transform the simplest ingredient—eggs—into a satisfying, even elegant meal. With a bit of practice, a rolled omelet is easy to make, which is why it works so well for breakfast, brunch, or—my favorite—an impromptu supper with a salad, a hunk of bread, and a glass of wine.

Two- or three-egg omelets are the most manageable. A six-egg omelet for two or more people can become unwieldy. I find it easier to make individual omelets, using two or three eggs per person.



A colorful filling turns an omeletinto an impromptu dinner. Sprinkle the filling down the middle just before folding.

Use a fork to mix the eggs until the whites and yolks are combined but not foamy. Though room-temperature eggs whisk to a greater volume, keep your eggs cold for safety's sake; the difference in volume is minimal.

Some chefs add two or three teaspoons of water, milk,

or cream to make the eggs fluffier and, in the case of cream, a bit richer. Go right ahead, but you'll find that the effect is slight and that a well-made omelet can be fluffy and creamy when made with eggs alone.

Seasonings, including salt and pepper, should be added

just before cooking. If you add the salt too early, it will draw out the moisture of the eggs, causing them to dry out.

Picking your pan. You can knock yourself out finding, seasoning, and caring for a special heavy-gauge aluminum pan specifically made for omelets, but I've been happy

### Creating creamy curds with constant stirring



Heat the oil and butter over high heat until the butter's audible bubbling subsides. Even a nonstick pan needs a little fat to keep the eggs from sticking and to add flavor.



**Pour the mixed and seasoned eggs into the hot pan.** A two-egg omelet fits nicely in a six-inch pan.



Rapidly stir the eggs with the back of a fork while shaking the pan to break up large curds. Continue scrambling until the eggs start to set, 20 to 30 seconds.



Stop stirring while the center is still moist. Spread the eggs out in the pan with the back of the fork. Lower the heat and allow the omelet to cook briefly undisturbed.



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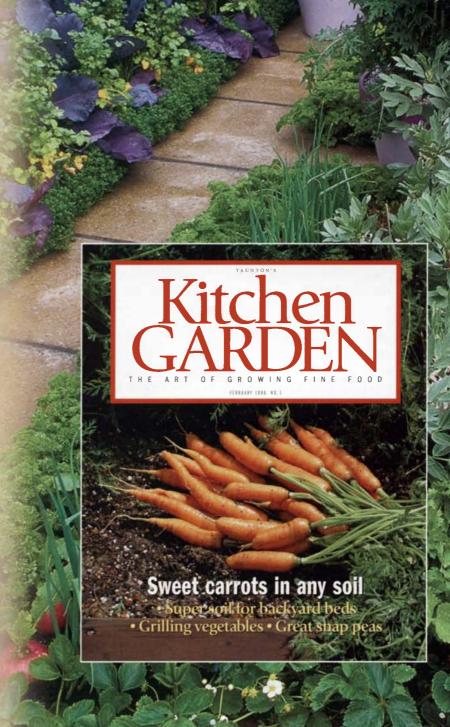
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FROM THE PUBLISHERS OF FINE COOKING

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### Rolling and serving the omelet



Use a fork to fold the near edge of the omelet to the center. If you've added a filling, it should follow the length of the fold so that you have some in every bite.



With the pan tilted, bang the handle to coax the far edge of the omelet up the side of the pan until it falls back onto itself. Use a fork to give it that extra push, if necessary.



Invert the pan and turn the omelet, seam side down, onto the plate. Use a fork to help guide the omelet.



You can shape the finished omelet further with a fork or a spatula. You can also brush the omelet with a little butter for a nice sheen and added flavor.

and successful making omelets in my good-quality nonstick aluminum pan. Choose a pan with a heavy base and sloping sides, six to eight inches across the top, depending on how many eggs you're using.

A mix of butter and oil gives you flavor and a high smoking point. You can use butter alone, but you have to be careful not to let it burn. I like to heat a teaspoon of vegetable oil over high heat and then add about a teaspoon of butter. Another option is to use clarified butter, made by melting unsalted butter and pouring off the liquid, leaving the milk solids behind. Clarified butter gives you the flavor of butter with a higher smoking point.

Add the eggs when the fat is hot and emits a slightly nutty aroma. If you're not sure if the fat is hot enough, add a drop of egg: it should hiss when it hits the pan.

Vigorous stirring and shaking cooks the omelet evenly. A fork, held flat so as not to scratch the pan's surface, works better than a

whisk to create small curds for a creamy, not clumpy, omelet. Keep the eggs in constant motion, shaking the pan and stirring with the fork, until the eggs begin to set, about 20 or 30 seconds, depending on how many eggs you're cooking and the intensity of the heat.

Stop stirring while the center of the omelet is still moist; this allows the omelet to set neatly. If the eggs aren't evenly distributed in the pan at this stage, spread them out with the back of the fork, and

then use the fork to neaten

and loosen the omelet's edges.

just the time accordingly.

The "roll" is actually more of a fold. You want to fold the near edge away from you toward the center of the omelet, and then fold the far edge toward you to the center.

The first fold is best accomplished by lifting the edge with the fork and folding it over. The second is achieved by manipulating the pan, as shown in the photos above.

Once you've slid the finished omelet onto your plate, you can neaten its shape with the fork or a spatula.

omelet. The heat of the omelet is enough to melt cheese but not to cook most raw ingredients. My favorite fillings include herbs, cheese, sautéed mushrooms, steamed asparagus, diced peppers, lightly cooked shellfish, smoked fish, and ham.

You can keep the filling to a single item or combine a few, but remember to exercise restraint. You don't want the filling to overwhelm the subtle flavor of the eggs.

Two ways to fill an omelet. The most common way, and the one shown here, is best for cheese and chopped dry ingredients. Add about two tablespoons of these while cooking the omelet, just before folding. For wet fillings, such as ratatouille or seafood Newburg, slit the finished, rolled omelet lengthwise down its center and then spoon ½ cup of the filling into the pocket.

to cook raw fillings.

Fork to neaten JAZZING UP THE OMELET OMELET WITH FILLINGS

I usually let the omelet set this way for another 30 seconds or so. This lets the outside of the omelet brown slightly yet keeps the inside moist. If you find you like a slightly more cooked omelet or one that's a little looser, ad-

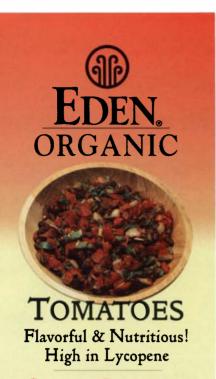
The heat of an omelet can melt

cheese, but it isn't enough

Have the filling ready and warm so it doesn't cool the

Molly Stevens, a Fine Cooking contributing editor, is a chef/instructor at the New England Culinary Institute in Essex, Vermont. ◆

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### SALSA CUBANO

1-14.5 oz. can EDEN Organic Diced Tomatoes with Green Chilies
1-15oz can EDEN Organic Black Beans\*, drained

1 bunch green onions, chopped 1-2 tablespoons cilantro, chopped

1 medium red or green pepper, chopped

1-2 tablespoons lime juice

Combine all of the above ingredients, and serve with corn chips or tortillas.

\*or use any EDEN Organic Beans



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### Professional-Style Ranges for the Home

Chicken stock is bubbling on a back burner next to a slow-cooking pot roast, while up front, tomato sauce simmers, and the water for the gnocchi is just about to boil. One of your guests wants tea, and you need to start sautéing vegetables.

It's moments like these—when you need more burners—that set many home cooks to dreaming about owning a professional-style range.

A spacious cooktop, more burners that throw more heat, and two ovens are some of the reasons active cooks often opt to install professional-style ranges. With all the power and size of their restaurant counterparts, these ranges maintain the features a home cook needs.

### YOU'LL GET BETTER HEAT AND MORE SPACE

One reason cooks love highvolume ranges is that they deliver more heat, which means faster, more accurate cooking. These ranges are fueled by natural gas, the most responsive heat source; some manufacturers offer electric ranges as an alternative. Gas heat is measured in Btu (British thermal units). The more Btu your range can deliver, the faster it will recover heat. Heat recovery is best understood by boiling water for pasta. Add the pasta to the water, and the water temporarily stops boiling. A professional-style range with burners that heat up to 14,000 or 17,500 Btu will return the water to a boil more quickly than a conventional range, which burns only 4,000 to 10,000 Btu.

Conventional ranges are 30 inches wide, 24 inches deep, and have four burners. Generally, the distance between the centers of the front and back burners is 9 inches—tight quarters if you're sautéing up front and simmering in back. Professional-style ranges can be as small as conventional ones, but typically are 36 to 60 inches wide and 30 inches deep, with 12 inches between the center of each burner.

### CONSIDER HOW YOU COOK

Investing in a range like this means laying down a fair chunk of change (\$2,400 to \$7,500), so it's important to ask yourself the right questions.

- ◆ Do you often cook for six or more? If you do, you'll likely get good use out of a professional-style range.
- ◆ How often do you use the cooktop? Most home cooks spend 75% of their kitchen time working on the cooktop and 25% using the oven. If you cook in your oven more than that, hang onto your conventional range and buy a convection oven, rather than spend lots of money on a



All professional-style ranges for the home have plenty of insulation—they can nestle right next to kitchen cabinets without risk of heating them.

professional-style range with a six-burner cooktop.

### **EVALUATE PERFORMANCE**

Many of these ranges are marketed seductively—don't be taken in. Efficiency and performance should be your first priorities when shopping for a professional-style range.

- Will your biggest pans fit on the cooktop? Measure the distance between the centers of each burner: 12 inches means it will accommodate several big pans at a time.
- ◆ Do the burners throw a wide range of heat? Consider Btu: How high will the burner flame go for fast, high-heat sautéing? How low will it burn for slow, long simmering?

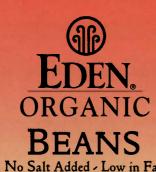
### WHAT'S ON THE MARKET?

Several brands of professionalstyle ranges are available. Sizes run from 30 to 60 inches wide. The model you choose may depend on whether you're replacing your current range or rebuilding the entire kitchen, your space constraints, and the options you want.

Some features are standard. All are lit by an electronic ignition system. Most have easy-to-clean, removable drip trays and individual grates. Professional-style ranges should have ventilated hoods. Few have self-cleaning ovens.

Gas burners styles. Most restaurant-style ranges have open-flame burners, except for Thermador and Dacor, which have sealed burners. (Wolf offers them on its 30-inch model.) Open-flame burners provide a central flame around which burns a circular or star-shaped flame; sealed burners provide just

22 FINE COOKING



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### ARTICHOKE BEAN DIP

1-15oz. can EDEN Organic Navy or Pinto Beans, drained

- 1-14oz can artichoke hearts, drained
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice
- 1 tablespoon EDEN Extra Virgin Olive Oil
- 1 clove garlic, pressed
- 2 whole green onions, chopped
- 1 tablespoon parsley, chopped salt and pepper to taste

Combine all ingredients in a food processor and blend until smooth.

Variations: Enjoy adding these combinations to the basic recipe regreen olives and chives, chopped; fennel and chives, chopped; rosemary, chopped.

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### KITCHENS FOR COOKS

the circle of flame. With a sealed burner, there's less heat loss from flame to pan, and they're easier to clean. But a sealed burner's flame can't be turned as low as an open flame, so for very low simmering you'll need a heat diffuser. Dacor's new model comes with its own diffusers.

Dynasty offers a separate simmer burner, as does Thermador. Thermador's clicks on and offevery 45 seconds. I prefer gas burners that maintain a constant low flame without having to click on and off.

Beyond these basics, there are many options available on professional-style ranges.

Infrared broilers. Several manufacturers offer an interior infrared broiler (\$500 to \$750). While conventional broilers provide a U-shaped flame, an infrared broiler is a ceramic plate on the roof

of the oven. Its flame goes through the entire surface, casting a wider, more intense expanse of heat.

Convection ovens. Radiant ovens (the type found in most conventional ranges) have a heating element at the bottom of the oven. In a convection oven, a fan wrapped with a heating element at the back of the oven bathes the entire oven with circulating heat, eliminating the need to rotate pans or change racks during cooking. Convection ovens, which cost \$500 to \$750, can't be beat for fast, even baking and browning, but circulating air can disturb delicate pastries and pull too much moisture from some foods. Most professional-style ranges have one radiant oven and one convection oven. Many have ovens that change from radiant to convection

with the flick of a switch. For me, one of each is ideal.

Griddles and grills. You can have a griddle installed for \$400 to \$600, but I don't think it's worth the money. A built-in griddle heats up slowly, and it takes up two burners' worth of space. A portable griddle is less expensive and can be stored when you don't need it.

Grills, on the other hand, are worth the space, easy to use, safe, and clean. Most manufacturers offer grills as an option, for \$400 to \$700.

Other options. These include wok rings (under \$100), and a stainless-steel backsplash with a high shelf (\$250 to \$500). While I don't find a wok ring is necessary, I'm partial to my shelf and the space it offers for frequently used utensils and setting down hot pots.

### INSTALLATION REQUIRES A PROFESSIONAL

To install a restaurant-style range at home, you'll need one electric plug for the electronic ignition system and another for the convection oven, as well as a gas-pressure regulator. The range's gas inlet pipe must match the ½-inch gas inlet pipe that comes into the house. If your range uses a 3/4-inch pipe, you'll need a reducer to bring the two together. And the ventilation system must be installed properly. For efficiency and safety, it's essential that a professional do the installation.

Certified kitchen designer Don Silvers is a consultant and a teacher at UCLA. He's the author of Kitchen Design with Cooking in Mind (NMI, 1994) and is on the Internet at sildesigns@aol.com.

Manufacturer/ sizes available		Sealed burners	Individual grates	Radiant/convection oven switchover	OPTIONS					
	Btu per burner				Interior infrared broiler	Backsplash/ shelf	Wok ring	Grill	Griddle	Approximate base price
Dacor 30-inch 48-inch*	to 15,000 to 15,000	•		#	•	•	•	:		n/a n/a
DCS 30-inch	500-15,000	V. Francis		WAR # 250	•	•				\$2800
36-inch	500-15,000		•	#	•	•	•	•		\$4400
48-inch†	500-15,000			one each oven	•	•	•	•	•	\$5200
Dynasty 30-inch	1,000-15,000**	<b>同时性20</b>	对现代之世	# # 100		•	•	•	•	n/a
36-inch	1,000-15,000**		CON SIN		•	S	•	•	•	\$3850
48-inch†	1,000-15,000**			n/a	n/a	•	•	•	•	n/a
60-inch†	1,000-15,000**			n/a	n/a	•	•	•	•	n/a
Five-Star 30-inch	400-14,000			#		•	S		•	\$3000
36-inch	400-14,000			and the second		•	S	•	S	\$3850
48-inch†	400–14,000	5				•	S	•	S	\$5000
Garland 30-inch	to 15,000			AND STREET	•	•	•			\$2980
36-inch	to 15,000				•	•	•		•	\$5550
48-inch†	to 15,000				•	•	•	•	•	\$7850
60-inch†	to 15,000				•	•	•	•	•	\$12,900
Thermador 30-ind	ch 375–15,000		1 / A / A			•				\$2400
36-inch	375-15,000			A TOP OF THE PERSON NAMED IN		•		•	•	\$3750
48-inch†	375–15,000		TO THE PARTY OF			•		•	•	\$7350
Viking 30-inch	1,000-15,000				•	•	•			\$2575
36-inch	1,000-15,000				•	•	•	•	•	\$3975
48-inch	1,000-15,000				•	•	•	•	•	\$5150
60-inch	1,000-15,000				•	•	•	•	•	\$6925
Wolf 30-inch	500-16,000				•	•	•			\$2100
371/4-inch	1,100-17,500		CAPACITY		•	•	•		•	\$3800
48-inch†	1,100-15,000			•	•	•			•	\$6500
481/4-inch†	1,200-17,500			1 - 1 - 1 - 1 - 1 - 1 - 1 - 1 - 1 - 1 -	•	•	•		•	\$6700
59¼-inch†	1,200-17,500			•	•	•	•		•	\$7700

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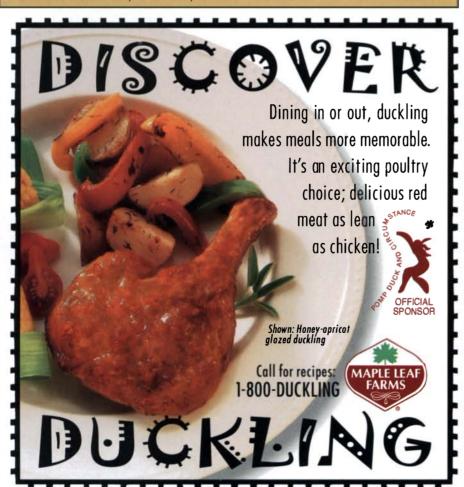
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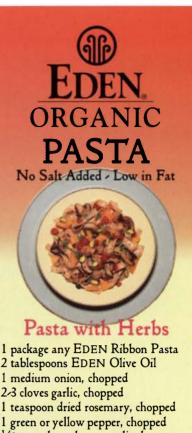






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1 package any EDEN Ribbon Pasta
2 tablespoons EDEN Olive Oil
1 medium onion, chopped
2-3 cloves garlic, chopped
1 teaspoon dried rosemary, chopped
1 green or yellow pepper, chopped
1/2 pound mushrooms, sliced
2 medium zucchini, chopped
1 tablespoon dried basil
1-14.5oz. can EDEN Diced Tomatoes
1-15oz. can EDEN Crushed Tomatoes
1/2 cup EDEN Mirin
LIMA sea salt, to taste

Cook pasta according to package directions; set aside. Heat oil, sautè onion, garlic and rosemary for 3 minutes. Add green pepper, mushrooms, zucchini, and sautè 3 more minutes. Add basil, diced tomatoes, crushed tomatoes, mirin, and simmer 5 minutes. Salt to taste and serve over pasta.

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After removing a pot from the oven, I always wrap a hand

towel around the handle. This ensures that if anyone tries to pick up the pot, he or she won't get burned.

> —Howard Goldberg, Manalapan, NJ

### Roll dough precisely with a template

When you have to roll out pie crust or pastry dough to a specific size, draw the shape you want on kitchen parchment or waxed paper. Use the paper as a guide on the bottom or top of your dough when rolling out.

> —Lisa Jung, San Rafael, CA

### Potato water for pizza dough

When I make my own pizza dough, I like to use warm potato water to proof the yeast. The starchy water helps create a wonderfully chewy crust, and the potato adds a phenomenal amount of flavor. To make potato water, use any type of potato (I like Yukon Gold). Chop the potato into large pieces, put it in a saucepan with just a bit more water than your recipe calls for, bring it to a boil, and let it simmer for at least 20 minutes. The water will be cloudy and may have small pieces of potato floating in it. Strain the water and measure it; add more plain water if necessary to get the amount required for the dough. Let the water cool to tepid before vou dissolve the yeast in it. As for the cooked potato, you can discard it or cut it into thin slices to use as a pizza topping.

> –Lana Baziuk, Toronto, Ontario

### Store herbs for long refrigerator life

To keep herbs, I sprinkle them lightly with cold water, wrap them in a paper towel, put them in a plastic bag, breathe into the bag to blow it up, and seal the bag tightly. The extra air seems to give the herbs a booster shot of energy.

> —Doris Davlin. Pauma Valley, CA

### Grapefruit knife for easy bagel cutting

When cutting a bagel, I use a curved, serrated grapefruit knife. By using a sawing motion, the curved blade helps keep the bagel in place and easily cuts it in half.

—Linda Sclafani, New York, NY

### No-stick grating

Before you shred cheese with a hand-held grater, spray the grater with cook-





Unglazed ceramic kitchen tiles are a cheap and effective alternative to expensive baking stones.

### Microwave fruit for more juice

To get the most juice from citrus fruits, heat them in the microwave for 25 seconds or so before squeezing.

> —Dee Ford. Louisville, KY

### The \$2 baking stone

There isn't much that can beat the taste and texture of fresh breads and pizza crusts baked on a ceramic oven stone, but why pay \$20 or \$30 for a stone, or close to \$40 for a ceramic tile kit? You can get the same quality ceramic tile and line an entire level of your oven for about \$2.

I use brown unglazed ceramic kitchen tiles, sold at home improvement stores for about 30 cents for each 8-inch square. When I make pizza or bread, I lay the tiles in the oven before heating it. It's an extremely cheap, easy way to make delicious baked goods. When the tiles cool, their size and shape allow for easy cleaning and quick-stacking storage.

> —Joshua Finkler, Champaign, IL

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pan, or keep herbs tasting

fresh? Write to Tips, Fine

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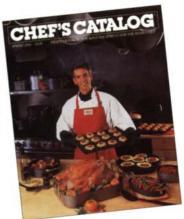
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### Thaw food quickly without gimmicks

You can thaw frozen foods quickly with a heavy aluminum frying pan. Fill the pan with hot water and wait a minute or two for the pan to warm. Pour out the water and set the frozen food in the pan. When the pan cools, repeat the heating process with hot water and turn the food over to thaw it from the other side.

Aluminum is an excellent heat conductor that quickly transfers its stored heat into the frozen food. This method works just as well as those expensive thawing trays advertised on television.

> —Robert Ponsi, Eustis, FL

### Render fat in the microwave

For years I rendered beef and chicken fat on the stove, a process that takes a lot of time and careful watching. Now I put about 1/4 cup of chopped beef suet, chicken fat, or pork fat in a 1-cup Pyrex container, cover it with plastic wrap, and microwave on high for 1 minute. Then I give the container a quarter-turn and repeat the process until the fat liquefies. I let the liquid fat cool before straining, and then store it in the freezer. It keeps indefinitely, and it's easy to portion the amount you want to use.

> —Jeanne F. Schimmel, Hobe Sound, FL

### Oil measuring cups

Before measuring honey or molasses, coat the inside of your measuring cup with a thin film of canola oil. The sticky liquid will slide out and leave a perfectly empty measuring container and nothing to scrape out.

> —Janet C. deCarteret, Bellevue, WA



Grate frozen butter to thaw it quickly.

### **Grate frozen butter**

To quickly soften frozen butter, grate the butter onto a plate. It will soon soften to room temperature.

—Suzanne Campodonico, Menlo Park, CA

### Techniques for rolling dough

When rolling dough, always roll from the middle away from you, and then from the middle toward you. Never roll the pin from side to side. To roll evenly, give the dough a quarter turn and continue rolling. Also, only roll just to the edges, never past them; this would make the edges too thin and more likely to burn.

—Barbara Реррег, Salinas, СА

### Use water to measure solid fats

Here's a quick and easy way to measure solid fats without mess. If your recipe calls for ¾ cup solid shortening, fill a liquid measuring cup with water to the ¼-cup line. Add the shortening, making sure it's completely submerged, until the water reaches the 1-cup level. Pour off the water and you have the shortening you need.

—Janet Morgan, Charlestown, RI

### Garlic press for candied ginger

I like to use candied ginger in syrup for baking and desserts, but the sticky balls are messy to chop. I use my garlic press for the job; the ginger presses into very thin strips which almost vanish in cookies and cakes. They're good in stir-fries, too.

—Ruth Richman, St. Peters, Prince Edward Island

### Waxed paper for quick garlic chopping

I don't like cleaning cutting boards. If I only have to chop a few garlic cloves for a dish, I fold a 16-inch piece of waxed paper twice, lay it on the cutting board, and chop my garlic on top of the paper, turning the paper instead of my knife. The waxed paper is also a handy place to store garlic for

30 minutes or so (just fold over the paper), and the paper also makes it easy to carry the garlic to the waiting pan.

—Joanne Bouknight, Cos Cob, CT

### Paint scrapers in the kitchen

I use a paint scraper to cut and scrape dough, to scoop up diced and chopped ingredients, and to clean dough from the work counter when I'm finished baking.

> —Bill Moran, San Diego, TX

### Save cheese rinds

Don't throw out the hard rinds of parmigiano reggiano. Save them whole in a plastic bag to use the next time you want to make a brothy soup. Added to soup, the cheese rinds flavor and thicken the broth. Best of all, simmering the rinds in the hot liquid softens any cheese that's left on the rind. When the soup is finished, fish out the rinds and use a paring knife to scrape off every bit of the costly cheese and add it back to the soup.

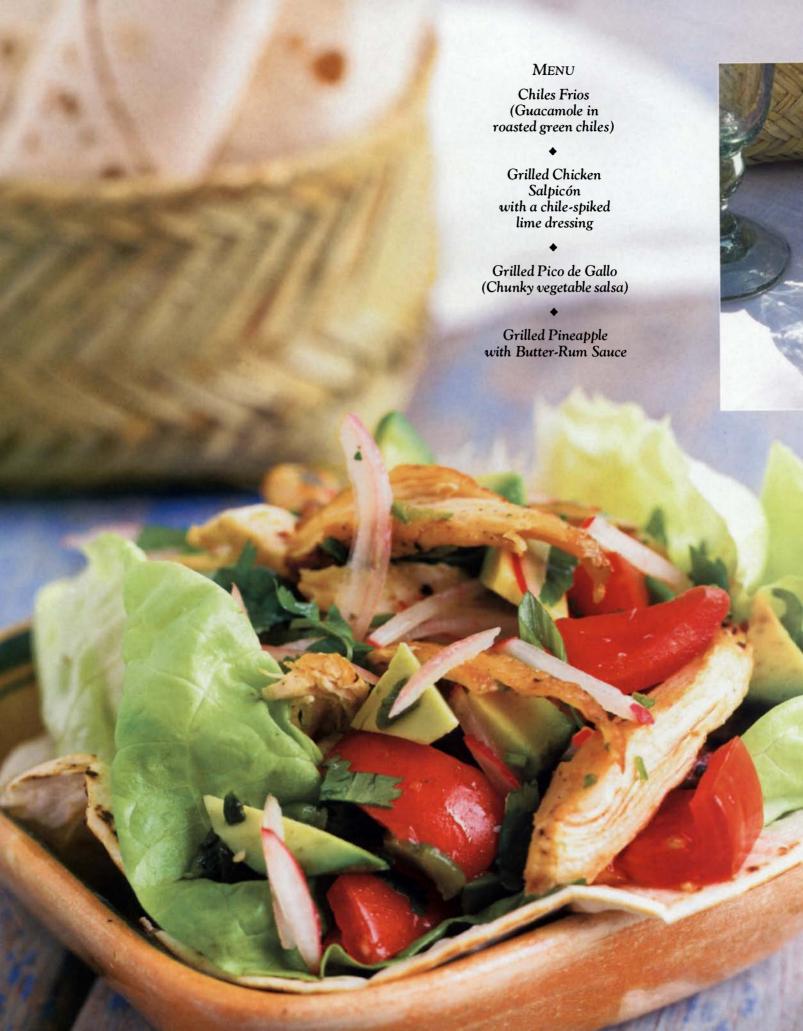
—Linda Wertz, Weatherford, TX

### A second use for your tea ball

I use a mesh tea ball to apply a light, even dusting of confectioners' sugar to pastries and cakes. My tea ball has a 5-inch handle that opens the ball when squeezed. I plunge the opened ball into the container of powdered sugar, close the ball, and withdraw. I then hold the ball over the pastry and tap the handle against my free hand. It's easy to control the amount I'm applying, because the sugar stays put until the ball is tapped.

—Meg Houston, Lyme, NH ◆







### A Tex-Mex Menu from the Grill

The vibrant dishes of "border cuisine" are alive with chiles, fresh vegetables, and lots of smoke from the grill

BY W. PARK KERR

Marinated chicken gets shredded and seasoned with a chilespiked lime dressing (left) for Grilled Chicken Salpicón, the main dish of this Tex-Mex menu. Spirited Grilled Pico de Gallo (above), an unsurpassable salsa, accompanies the smoky chicken. Guacamole cools the tongue. Stuffed into roasted mild green chiles to make Chiles Frios (right), it can be eaten with a fork like a side dish. Even dessert comes off the grill. For Grilled Pineapple with **Butter-Rum Sauce** (bottom right), hot, juicy, tangy pineapple slices are paired with a buttery sauce and vanilla ice cream.





live in El Paso, which, for those of you who are geographically challenged, is on the border of Mexico, and I mean *on* the border: stroll ten minutes from downtown, cross a little pedestrian bridge, and suddenly you're in another country.

Sharing the border with Mexico has led to lots of cross-cultural traditions down here, especially when it comes to food. Border cuisine is a special type of food that you'll only find in west Texas, southern New Mexico, and Arizona. It's not Santa Fe food, nor is it the Tex-Mex of restaurant chains with lots of gloppy cheese and mushy beans. Our food is cocina del pobres—cuisine of the poor—which, in my opinion, is one of the richest, most exciting cuisines you could be lucky enough to eat.

### OPEN-AIR MARKETS INSPIRE THE MENU

My inspiration for cooking border cuisine comes from the open-air markets in Juárez, the city across the border from El Paso. I go over early on Saturday mornings to take my pick of the fresh fruit, chiles, vegetables, and herbs overflowing from the stalls that line the narrow, winding streets. The market buzzes, not just with the pitches from the vendors, but with the technicolored displays of limes, melons, papayas, chiles, cilantro, and cactus pads, and the smoky-sizzly smells

of the street food that's cooked and served on the spot.

I think the stall owners are the real culinary geniuses of our region. They take that-morning fresh ingredients, apply very few techniques (a chop here, a peel there), and then add a kiss of smoke and char from their portable mesquite-fired braziers to make delicious stuff: salsas, burritos, fresh salads—the kind of dishes that I immediately go home and try to recreate on my backyard grill. This kind of casual, outdoor food is, of course, great for entertaining, since in El Paso, we throw our guests out in the back yard the minute they arrive.

### WHAT'S IN THE BORDER PANTRY?

As I said, border cuisine is simple but vivacious. The mainstay is lots of fresh produce. A border cuisine "starter kit" would include:

- red, ripe tomatoes, Haas avocados, onions, garlic, bunches of cilantro, juicy little Mexican limes;
- ◆ lots of different chiles: dried red chiles, fresh green chiles, chipotles (dried, smoked red jalapeños), fiery chiles de arbol, mellow, fleshy poblanos;
- stacks of fresh flour and corn tortillas and pots of pinto beans—not black beans (except in trendy restaurants);
- a great abundance of fresh Mexican fruits, for desserts and drinks.

While there are typical ingredients in border cuisine, the cooking itself is improvisational. Whatever is freshest and most appealing the morning I go shopping is what I make for dinner. I do have some consistent tactics, however:

Two chiles are better than one. And three are even better. If you're not familiar with chiles, you may think they just add "heat," but in truth, chiles also offer a broad range of flavors, from grassy to smoky to fruity.

The heat level of chiles varies, too. Anaheims (or long green chiles) are quite mild, while *chiles de arbol* and skinny

My cooking isn't about tongue-scorching heat.

I want the chiles to hold hands with the other flavors in a dish.

serranos do add some BTUs. But my cooking isn't about tongue-scorching, intense heat. I want the chiles to be a condiment and to peacefully hold hands with the other flavors in a dish. I often grill or roast them to transform the sharp naïveté of a raw chile into a more complex and balanced flavor.

I also find that a good way to cook with chiles is to incorporate more than one type. Because they each have a distinct flavor, you can get a real symphony of rounded chile flavor when you use two or more varieties in one dish.

A trio of bright accents: cilantro, garlic, and lime. The vibrancy that's typical of border cuisine comes in part from what I call "accent ingredients"—garlic, lime juice (fresh-squeezed only; Realime need not apply at my house), occasionally tequila, and lots and lots of fresh cilantro. While growing up in El Paso, I didn't know there was life without cilantro. Back when chefs in other parts of the country still thought cilantro was a zodiac sign, we were eating it in breakfast, lunch, and dinner dishes.

### THE GRILL IS THE PLACE TO BE AT SUMMER PARTIES

For this menu, I've picked a few favorite dishes for entertaining, my goal as a host always being to spend the least time in the kitchen and the most time with my guests, actually eating my own food.

The main dish is smoky chicken in a tangy vinaigrette. My grilled chicken salpicón is a variation on a traditional border dish of shredded boiled beef brisket dressed in a tangy sauce. For the grilled chicken version, you get to do most of your cooking outdoors on the grill. I believe that God meant for people to own gas grills, but charcoal grills are allowed, too. I like a really big smoke finish on my meat and poultry, so I grill the chicken with the lid closed, preferably over some mesquite or hickory soaked in cheap bourbon. I pour a little marinade onto the grill, too, just to increase the smokiness.

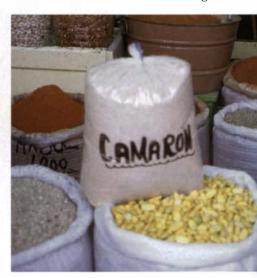
A chunky salsa that works like a side dish. I serve the chicken with a great



Border food is unimaginable without ripe tomatoes and fresh onions.



A cook at one of the market stalls demonstrates her technique for making tortillas from scratch.

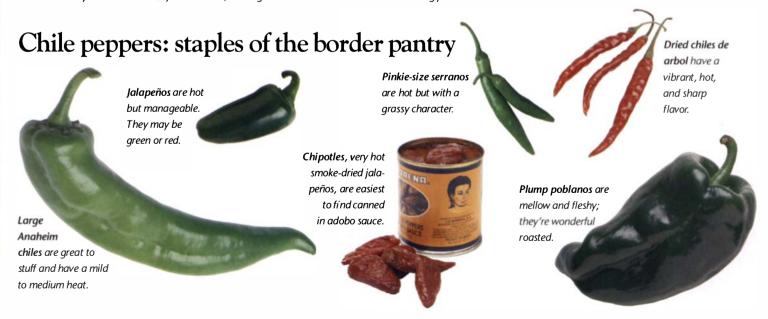


Sacks of beans, ground chiles, and dried shrimp (camarón) are plentiful in the markets of Juárez.

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Make it chunky. Grilled to a smoky smoothness, the vegetables in this salsa are best cut into big pieces.



grilled vegetable salsa that's so chunky it resembles a ratatouille. Salsas are key in border cuisine, and there are a million versions, but most are based on tomatoes, which provide a wet, saucy component. Grilling the ingredients caramelizes the sugars in the vegetables and gives them a delicious smoky-sweet flavor.

Guacamole soothes the burn. Guacamole is a suave, cool foil to all the spice and smokiness in the other dishes. For this menu, I suggest stuffing the guacamole into roasted long green chiles. People can eat it with a fork like a side dish, or scoop it onto other things.

The fruit dessert isn't local. My dessert—grilled pineapple with butter-rum sauce—can also be cooked entirely on the grill (except for the ice cream). I must admit that the recipe has nothing to do with border cuisine. When I was a kid, my parents went to New Orleans and ate bananas Foster; we've been enjoying variations eversince. So the dish is really a 1960s suburban El Paso thing.

### **Chiles Frios**

(Guacamole in long green chiles)
To fix the chiles up to a day ahead, oil and grill them, and then store them in a zip-top bag, but don't peel the chiles until you're ready to use them. Yields 4 cups; serves eight.

- 8 Anaheim or long green chiles, the longest and fleshiest possible, with a secure stem Olive oil
- 4 ripe Haas avocados
- 4 Roma tomatoes, halved, seeded, and chopped coarse
- 1 small onion, chopped fine
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 3 scallions (white and green parts), chopped fine 3/4 cup chopped fresh cilantro

Juice of 2 limes (about 3 Tbs.)

1 small jalapeño, seeded and chopped fine Salt and freshly ground black pepper

Grill and peel the chiles. Heat the grill or the broiler. Lightly brush the chiles with oil, grill on high heat until very blackened and blistered, turning frequently, about 15 min. Seal the blackened chiles in a paper bag, a heavy plastic bag, or foil, and leave them to steam for at least 10 min. Right below the crown, start peeling away the skin, taking care not to rip off the stem.

With a paring knife, make a vertical slit from the top of each chile to about ½ inch from the tail and remove the seeds. Be sure to leave the ribs in, or the flesh will come with them. (These ribs aren't that hot.) Set aside.

Make the guacamole. Peel and pit the avocados and put the flesh in a large bowl. Add

the tomatoes, onion, garlic, scallions, cilantro, lime juice, and jalapeño, and mash with a fork until blended but still fairly chunky. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

Spoon the guacamole into the chiles. Serve chilled or at cool room temperature.

### Grilled Chicken Salpicón

Serve this dish with a stack of warm, fresh flour or corn tortillas (see Notes, p. 16). Serves eight.

8 boneless, skinless chicken breast halves, pounded slightly to flatten

### FOR THE MARINADE:

Juice of 2 limes (about 3 Tbs.)

⅓ cup olive oil

1/4 cup tequila

¼ cup orange marmalade

3 large cloves garlic, minced

1 canned chi potle chile, puréed (optional)
Salt to taste

### FOR THE DRESSING:

½ cup fresh lime juice

½ cup olive oil

1 jalapeño, seeded and minced fine

1 serrano, seeded and minced fine

1 fresh poblano, roasted, peeled, and chopped Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

### FOR THE GARNISH:

1 large ripe tomato, cut in ½-inch chunks 2 large ripe Haas avocados, cut in ½-inch chunks, tossed in lime juice

½ cup lightly packed chopped cilantro leaves 1 small bunch chopped scallions (green parts only)

1 small red onion, chopped Handful of radishes, rinsed and sliced

In a nonreactive container, combine the chicken with the marinade ingredients. Swish to combine. Marinate about 2 hours at room temperature or 4 hours in the refrigerator.



Heat the butter-rum sauce on the grill as you cook the pineapple and the only reason you'll have to go into the kitchen is to fetch another bottle of tequila.

Roasting enhances the flavor of chiles and makes them easy to peel. Once roasted, put the chiles in a paper bag to steam for about 10 minutes and their skins will slip right off.



Share like hissen



Heat the grill. Grill the chicken until just done, about 5 min. per side. Set aside until cool and then pull it apart into long shreds.

While the chicken is marinating or cooling, make the dressing by whisking together the lime juice, oil, jalapeño, serrano, roasted poblano, salt, and pepper. Toss with the shredded chicken.

Just before serving, gently toss the chicken with the garnish ingredients. Mound the salpicón in a lettuce-lined bowl and serve at room temperature or slightly chilled.

### Grilled Pico de Gallo

For this recipe, aggressive cooking is the key. Don't be shy, grill the ingredients until they're *buen cocido*—well done. *Yields 5 cups*.

1 fresh poblano

4 jalapenos (a mix of red and green, if possible) 10 plum tomatoes

10 to 12 scallions

2 large onions, halved crosswise

8 medium tomatillos, papery husks removed Olive oil

3 cloves garlic, chopped

1 Tbs. balsamic vinegar

Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

Toss the poblano, jalapeños, tomatoes, scallions, onions, and tomatillos with a few splashes of olive oil in a large bowl until the vegetables are well coated.

Heat the grill. Arrange the vegetables on the grill, clustering them to make controlling the heat easier. Cook them, turning fairly often, until lightly charred and softened. If flames start to spit, squirt some water on the coals. When done, take the vegetables off the heat and let them rest until cool enough to handle.

Seal the blackened chiles in a paper or heavy plastic bag (or foil) and leave to steam at least 10 min. Peel the chiles, pull off the stems, and remove the seeds. Cut the chiles and the other vegetables into chunks (the tomatoes will be mushy). Toss in a large bowl with the garlic, vinegar, salt, and pepper. Adjust the seasonings and serve at room temperature.

### Grilled Pineapple with Butter-Rum Sauce

You can cook this sauce by putting the pan right on the grill, or make it ahead and reheat it while you grill the pineapple. *Serves eight*.

8 Tbs. (1 stick) unsalted butter
1 cup lightly packed brown sugar
½ cup Meyers or other dark rum
A pinch each of nutmeg, cinnamon, allspice
Oil or spray oil for the grill
8 slices, 1 inch thick, very ripe fresh pineapple,
cored if not totally soft in the center

In a small saucepan, cook the butter, sugar, rum, and spices over medium heat, stirring, until the sugar is dissolved and the butter melted. Bring to a simmer and let cook for about 10 min. longer, stirring occasionally, until the sauce is slightly syrupy and coats the back of a spoon. Keep warm.

Heat the grill, making sure it's clean, and brush or spray it with a touch of oil so the pineapple doesn't stick. Grill the pineapple slices until warmed through and caramelized, about 10 min. each side.

Serve immediately, in rings or chunks, with the warm sauce and ice cream, if you like.



Park Kerr and his Chihuahua, Maximillian, enjoy border cuisine at their home in El Paso, Texas. Kerr founded the El Paso Chile Company and has written five cookbooks, including Chiles and Tortillas (Morrow).

### Tequila choices

### The bold flavor of gold tequila is a good match for spicy chicken salpicón

In the Mexican state

of Jalisco, just west of Guadalajara, the sweet sap of the blue agave (not a cactus, but a cousin to the amaryllis) is distilled into tequila. Distinctively flavored and ranging widely in complexity, quality and price, tequilas are a versatile ingredient for drinks and cooking. Of the three main types of tequila, white or silver (plata) is the lightest and freshest tasting. In wine terms, it compares to a Chardonnay aged in stainless steel, as opposed to oak. Gold tequila can be aged in wood and is sometimes colored with caramel. Aged tequila (añejo), the

costliest, spends at least a year in oak barrels, giving it more character and depth.

The chicken salpicón with grilled pico de gallo—sweet, spicy, and smoky—needs a bold tequila in both the recipe and in the glass. Go for a gold, on ice or spritzed with lime-flavored mineral water. And

with the juicy grilled pineapple dessert, savor a splash of fine añejo in a brandy snifter. Both Sauza and Herradura make reliable varieties of all three types of tequila. Rosina Tinari Wilson, a contributing editor for Fine Cooking, is a food and wine writer and teacher who's based in the San Francisco area.

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# Potato Salad Grows Up

Match Yellow Finns, Red Bliss, and fingerlings with market-fresh ingredients for potato salads of substance

BY DORETTE E. SNOVER

y grandmother raised me in rural Pennsylvania, and some of my fondest memories are of shopping with her at a farmers' market, where we'd buy the freshly dug new potatoes that appeared on the stands every summer. I now live down South with a family of my own, and I go to a different farmers' market, but I still crave those potatoes.

In the summer months, there are always plenty of potato salads at my house. Over the years, I've



**Low-starch fingerlings stay intact** when tossed with a warm bacon dressing. Cayenne-toasted pecans add unexpected crunch.



**Dry boiled whole potatoes quickly** by draining them and then putting them back in the pot over low heat for a few minutes.

developed recipes for many different types. I add interesting vegetables, unusual dressings and seasonings, seafood, meat, and sometimes even cheese to my salads. Far more than boiled potatoes mixed with a little mayo and chopped egg, they're potato salads that have grown up.

The potato's blandness is actually a virtue—in

these salads, it brings out the best in a wide range of unexpected ingredients, taking potato salads from side dish to main course.

#### PICKING THE RIGHT POTATO

The surest way to keep cooked potatoes intact in salads is to choose the variety carefully.

The best potatoes for salads are those with a low starch content, sometimes called waxy or, mistakenly, "new" potatoes. (New potatoes are simply those that are harvested young.) Common low-starch varieties include Red Bliss and Yellow Finn. Others that you might find at a farmers' market include blue Caribe, which turns a striking blue-violet when cooked, and tender, tasty fingerlings. Baking potatoes, typically Idahoes and russets, have a dry, mealy texture that's great for baking, mashing or making into fries—but they tend to absorb water and fall apart when boiled. Yukon Golds, too, tend to go mushy in potato salads.

For a more flavorful salad, boil the potatoes in salted water; don't wait to season them until the salad is made. Potatoes must be salted while they cook, or they'll taste flat regardless of how much salt you add later on.

There's more than one way to cook potatoes for a salad. Most often, I simply boil them, but roasted potatoes make fine salads, too. There's no reason to peel salad potatoes before you cook them, and most low-starch potatoes have a thin, tasty skin that needs

no peeling at all. For quick cooking, cut the potatoes into halves or quarters, or simply leave them whole and slice them after they've cooked and cooled. Boiled potatoes will dry quickly if you drain them, put them back in their cooking pot, and set the pot over low heat for just a few minutes. The cooked potatoes will hold up better in the salad if you chill them before cutting them into bite-sized pieces and combining them with other ingredients.

To keep potatoes intact, be gentle—especially when you're making a warm potato salad. I usually mix the dressing in the bottom of a large salad bowl and then gently add the potatoes. I prefer to use my hands to do the mixing, but if you'd rather not, stirring with a large spoon will do just fine, as long as you do it gently.

#### FOR SUMMERTIME EASE, COOK THE POTATOES IN ADVANCE

Choose low-starch

potatoes that

won't get mushy

when mixed in salads.

When making potato salad in the summer, I want it to be easy. Often I'll cook the potatoes early in the day and refrigerate them, so my family and I can set our sights towards a hike in the woods or a swim

in the quarry. By the time I'm ready to make lunch or dinner, the potatoes are ready to be made into a salad that can be part of a picnic lunch or the centerpiece of dinner.

#### SALADS CAN BE CREAMY OR DRESSED WITH A VINAIGRETTE

Potato salads can be served

warm or cool. Use creamy mayonnaise-based dressings on chilled potatoes for cold salads. Vinaigrettes are versatile—use them for warm or cool potato salads. For a warm salad, I may cook the potatoes at the same time as the other ingredients and assemble the salad warm for a quick supper dish that needs only to be spooned over crunchy lettuces and served with a crusty bread.



**Stir it up.** For even cooking and to prevent sticking, give potatoes and vegetables an occasional stir while they're roasting.





#### Roasted Vegetable & Potato Salad with Oregano Relish & Feta

With its sweet roasted vegetables, this salad can be served warm or cool. *Yields 6 cups; serves four to six.* 

1½ Ib. Red Bliss potatoes, cut in rough ¾-inch cubes (about 6 cups)

1 medium eggplant, cut into 2-inch sticks ½ inch thick 1 red bell pepper, sliced thin, slices cut in half crosswise

1 yellow bell pepper, sliced thin, slices cut in half crosswise

1 lb. okra, bias-cut into ½-inch slices (about 2 cups)

1 small sweet onion (such as Vidalia), sliced ¼ inch thick

1 head garlic, cloves smashed and peeled

2 Tbs. olive oil

1/4 cup chopped fresh parsley

½ tsp. salt; more to taste

Freshly ground black pepper to taste
1 cup crumbled feta cheese (about 5 oz.)

#### FOR THE RELISH:

2 Tbs. chopped fresh oregano

2 Tbs. chopped fresh parsley

2 Tbs. snipped fresh chives

2 Tbs. chopped scallions

1/4 cup lime juice

1/4 cup honey

1/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil

Heat the oven to 375°F. In a very large roasting pan or ovenproof skillet, toss the potatoes, eggplant, peppers, okra, onion, and garlic with the olive oil, parsley, salt, and pepper. Roast, stirring often, until evenly browned, 50 to 60 min.

Make the relish while the vegetables are roasting. In a large serving bowl, mix the herbs, scallions, lime juice, and honey, and then whisk in the olive oil in a slow stream. Add the roasted vegetables and the feta and toss. Taste and add more salt and pepper if needed.

#### Tiny Potatoes with Bacon & Cayenne-Toasted Pecans

This salad tastes best when the potatoes are tossed with the hot bacon dressing and left to sit for an hour while the flavors develop. You can reheat it to serve it warm; I like it best that way. Yields 6 cups; serves four to six.

#### FOR THE PECANS:

1/2 cup pecan pieces

1/4 tsp. salt

1/8 tsp. cayenne

1 tsp. unsalted butter, melted

#### FOR THE POTATO SALAD:

2 lb. fingerlings or tiny new waxy potatoes Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

#### FOR THE DRESSING:

5 strips bacon

1/2 cup minced scallion

1/4 cup dry sherry

1/4 cup apple-cider vinegar

1 tsp. mustard seeds, crushed

1 Tbs. honey

2 Tbs. chopped fresh parsley

½ cup canola oil

**Toast the pecans.** Heat the oven to 350°F. In a small bowl, toss together the pecans, salt, cayenne, and butter. Spread this mixture on a baking sheet and toast until browned, about 15 min. Set aside to cool.

In a large pot, cover the potatoes with salted water. Bring to a boil and cook until the potatoes are tender,





Potatoes are mild companions that bring out the best in the ingredients with which they're paired.

A fork makes quick work of juicing a lemon, and mixing the dressing in the serving bowl means there will be fewer dishes to wash.



**Land and sea.** Shrimp, crabmeat, and sweet corn make an easy and satisfying main-dish potato salad.

15 to 20 min. Drain and pan-dry them. When they're cool enough to touch, slice or halve them (depending on their size). Set aside.

Make the hot bacon dressing. Sauté the bacon in a deep skillet over medium heat until crispy. Transfer the bacon to paper towels to drain, leaving the bacon fat in the pan. When the bacon is cool enough to handle, chop it and set it aside. Pour all but 1 tsp. of the fat from the pan, add the scallion and sauté over medium heat until softened, 4 to 5 min. Remove the pan from the heat and whisk in the sherry, vinegar, mustard seeds, honey, and parsley; combine well. Whisk in the oil in a slow stream.

Pour the warm dressing over the potatoes, sprinkle in the bacon, and toss gently to coat well. Let the potatoes rest for about 1 hour so the flavors can deepen. Toss in the pecans, taste, and add salt and pepper if needed.

#### Potato Salad with Seafood & Sweet Corn

This salad is best prepared ahead of time so that the flavors can blend. *Yields 6 cups; serves four to six.* 

1 lb. Yellow Finn potatoes

2 Tbs. fresh lemon juice <sup>2</sup>/<sub>3</sub> cup mayonnaise

1/4 cup finely chopped dill pickle

2 Tbs. finely chopped sweet onion (such as Vidalia)

1 tsp. Tabasco

1/4 cup chopped fresh dill

Kernels from 2 medium ears yellow or white corn,

cooked (about 1 cup)

½ lb. shrimp, peeled, deveined, cooked, and chopped (about 1 cup)

6 oz. backfin crabmeat (about 1 cup) Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

In a large pot, cover the potatoes with salted water. Bring to a boil and cook until the potatoes are tender, 15 to 20 min. Drain and pan-dry them. Refrigerate them until you're ready to assemble the salad.

In a large serving bowl, combine the lemon juice, mayonnaise, pickle, onion, Tabasco, and dill. Peel the chilled potatoes and cut them into ¼-inch slices. Add the potatoes to the bowl, along with the corn, shrimp, crabmeat, salt, and pepper and toss gently until well combined with the dressing. Taste and add salt and pepper if needed.

Dorette Snover, a food writer, makes her potato salads in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. ◆



# A Guide to Sweet, Tender Zucchini

Transform summer's most abundant vegetable into soup, side dishes, fritters—even noodles

BY LORETTA KELLER

y friends plant gardens every spring, and brown paper bags full of zucchini find their way to my doorstep every August. Since there's a tendency to look on zucchini as being big and bland—the dumb jock of the vegetable patch—I'm never sure if my neighbors have too many squash or not enough ideas. Either way, I'm happy to be the recipient: I think the fastest-growing vegetable in

the garden is also one of the most versatile in the kitchen.

"Baby" zucchini are delicious just barely cooked or batter-fried; young zucchini are per-

Finger food fit for a king. Batter-frying zucchini and its blossoms coaxes out the sweet tenderness of both.





Make way for tomatoes. Hold your knife parallel to the work surface to cut flat, even layers in the zucchini.



Slip tomato slices in between the layers to make "fans." If you have Japanese eggplant on hand, slide in slices of them, too.

fect for quick sautés and for roasting whole; and those king-size squash are great for puréeing into soup or for grating into long, slender noodles. With so many ways to appreciate zucchini's delicate texture and sweet taste, homeless squash are always welcome guests at my house.

#### **ZUCCHINI IS SWEET WITH ANY SEASONING**

Zucchini's mild flavor works well with both intense and subtle seasonings. Its sweetness is a delicious

backdrop for fresh herbs. This vegetable is made for basil, oregano, and tomatoes, and it loves the garlic and ginger of a stir-fry.

Good zucchini comes in small packages. Young zucchini is zucchini at its best. For most recipes, the ideal squash is one that's still slender and measures four to six inches long. These zucchini have thin skin, tiny undeveloped seeds, and sweet flesh that's tender but firm.

At the grocery store or in the garden, look for firm, medium-green zucchini that are just slightly pliable. Gently scrape the skin with a fingernail; it should wrinkle easily. Refrigerated in a loose plastic bag, zucchini will last about three or four days.

If a zucchini is between seven and ten inches long, it usually has darker, tougher skin and larger seeds. I recommend that you cut these older zucchini in half and scrape out the seeds with a spoon before you cook them.

Don't forget the flowers. The radiant yellow flowers that grow on the zucchini plant are also edible and have a delicate squash-like flavor of their own. Try them sautéed and folded into omelets. They also look lovely floating on top of a bowl of soup, but I like them best lightly battered and fried (see recipe, p. 45). Look for the flowers at farm stands or pluck them from your garden, but take only those that are closed and fresh looking. If you pick them from your vegetable patch, keep in mind

that the female flowers (those with enlarged bases) are the ones that give birth to baby zucchini. Picking them means you'll limit your harvest of full-grown squash.

Some zucchini are only fit for the county fair. As for the gargantuan, one-foot-plus zucchini you sometimes see at the end of August, bigger isn't better. As zucchini grow, their sugar turns to starch, the seeds mature, and the flesh becomes tough and woody.

While unchecked zucchini can grow to truly impressive lengths and girths, these squash should only be on your table as centerpieces.

#### WELL-COOKED ZUCCHINI IS NEVER BLAND

A zucchini is mostly water, which is probably why it has a bad reputation for being bland and soggy. That's how it turns out when it isn't treated properly, but if you give zucchini the cooking it deserves, the results are delicious.



There's beauty in simplicity. The summer garden's simplest, most copious offerings make an elegant casserole.

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The ideal zucchini

is slender and four to

six inches long, with

thin skin, tiny seeds,

and sweet flesh that's

tender but firm.



thick and rounds sliced about 1/4 inch thick work well. These shapes are slender enough to cook fast. but sturdy enough to retain their texture.

- ◆ Roasted. Tiny zucchini can be tossed with olive oil and quickly roasted whole, and medium zucchini are wonderful halved and roasted with herbs and Parmesan. I also like to stuff zucchini by making several long, lengthwise slits, into which I slip slices of tomato. Then I bathe them with white wine and olive oil, sprinkle with salt, and bake these "stuffed" zucchini on a bed of sliced onions, garlic, and thyme (see recipe, p. 44). You can also hollow out zucchini and stuff it with cheese, rice, meat, savory breadcrumbs, or even its own grated flesh.
- ◆ **Grilled.** Thick slices of grilled zucchini are delicious eaten hot or at room temperature. Just cut the zucchini lengthwise into ½-inch slices, brush the slices with olive oil, sprinkle with salt and pepper, and lay them on a hot grill. Zucchini gets soggy if it stays on the heat too long, so be sure the grill is fairly hot and watch the vegetables carefully.
- ◆ Batter-fried. Fried zucchini, simply salted and served piping hot, is a real treat. Baby zucchini and zucchini flowers can be dipped in the batter whole; larger zucchini should be cut in 3-inch sticks. When you slip the battered vegetables into the hot oil, don't overcrowd the pot or the zucchini will be greasy.
- ◆ Cut into "noodles." Zucchini noodles are probably my favorite use for zucchini that are overgrown but still less than 10 inches long. When you slowly push a long zucchini against the julienne blade of a mandoline, you get dozens of beautiful green and white "noodles." To avoid the seeds, rotate the zucchini as you go. When you get close to the seedy core, throw it away and reach for another zucchini. Quickly blanch the noodles and toss them with a dressing—they're delicious cold or hot. You can even mix the zucchini noodles with cooked linguine.

(Recipes on the following pages)



A zucchini's size and shape determine the best way to cook it. For most recipes, a slender squash is ideal.

There are several ways to help zucchini avoid a watery fate. When cooked quickly at high heat, this squash is crisp and sweet. Stuffed zucchini needs more cooking time, but if given enough space, its water evaporates in the oven and the results are melt-in-your-mouth tender. When you batter-fry or blanch zucchini, salt it before cooking. Salt forces water out of the vegetable, which means the zucchini stays crisper and cooks faster. Here are some of my favorite ways to prepare

◆ Sliced and sautéed. Quickly sautéed in olive oil with a pinch of sea salt and a few thyme leaves, zucchini is a fast and delicious side dish. To sauté zucchini, you need to slice it in shapes that cook well over fast, high heat. Two-inch sticks about ½ inch



Give zucchini time and space. When you bake them slowly with enough room in the pan, zucchini fans are meltingly tender.

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#### **Zucchini-Tomato Fans**

This casserole makes a beautiful presentation. If you can find tender Japanese eggplant, insert slender slices of them along with the tomatoes. *Serves four as a side dish.* 

1 large onion, halved and sliced thin 3 large cloves garlic, chopped fine 2 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil Salt and freshly ground black pepper 1 tsp. chopped fresh thyme (or ½ tsp. dried) 2 medium tomatoes (4 oz. each), sliced ¼ inch thick 2 medium zucchini (7 oz. each)

4 bay leaves 3 Tbs. white wine

Heat the oven to 350°F. Lightly oil a 9x13-inch baking dish.

In a small bowl, toss the onion and garlic with 1 Tbs. olive oil, ¼ tsp. salt, ¼ tsp. pepper, and the thyme. Spread the mixture in the baking dish and set aside.

Cut each tomato slice in half to form half-moons and sprinkle a pinch of salt on both sides of each tomato slice. Set aside.

Make the zucchini fans—Trim the stems of the zucchini to about ¼ inch. With a thin, sharp knife, slice the zucchini in half lengthwise. Lay the cut sides down on the work surface.

With your knife parallel to the work surface, make three slices, ¼ inch apart, in each zucchini half from the end to just below the stem without cutting all the way through. Gently lift these fan-like layers and sprinkle a pinch of salt between each layer. Slip two tomato slices in each slit and insert a bay leaf in the top section of each zucchini fan.

Carefully arrange the fans on top of the onions. Drizzle the vegetables with the remaining 1 Tbs. olive oil and the white wine; sprinkle with salt and pepper. Cover the dish with foil and bake for 30 min. Remove the foil and cook until the zucchini is tender, another 25 to 30 min.



**Full of flavor and colored a brilliant chartreuse**, Curried Zucchini Soup is finished with a swirl of crème fraîche.



**Play that mandoline.** Slow, smooth strokes result in long, slender zucchini noodles. Don't have a mandoline? You can also cut these noodles with a knife.

#### **Curried Zucchini Soup**

I like to garnish this soup with a swirl of *crème fraîche* or sour cream flavored with lime juice and zest. *Yields* 8 cups; serves six to eight as a first course.

6 Tbs. olive oil

5 zucchini (about 2 lb. total), trimmed and sliced into half-rounds

3 medium onions (about 1 lb. total), peeled and sliced thin

3 large apples (about 1½ lb. total), halved, cored, and sliced thin

1 medium carrot, peeled and sliced thin

3 cloves garlic, chopped fine

1 tsp. chopped fresh ginger

1 or 2 serrano chiles, seeded and chopped fine

About 10 cilantro stems

2 Tbs. mild curry paste (or 1½ tsp. curry powder)

5 to 6 cups chicken stock, homemade or low-salt canned

2 tsp. fresh lemon juice; more to taste

2 tsp. salt

In a large saucepan, heat the olive oil over medium heat. Add the zucchini, onions, apples, and carrot and cook without browning until the onion is soft and translucent, about 15 min. Add the garlic, ginger, chiles, cilantro stems, and curry paste. Continue cooking, stirring often, until all the ingredients are tender, about 20 min.

Add the chicken stock and bring to a boil over high heat. Reduce to a simmer and cook uncovered until the vegetables and the apples begin to fall apart, about 20 min. Add the lemon juice and salt.

Remove the soup from the heat to cool slightly and then purée in a blender or food processor—in batches if necessary—until very smooth. Reheat the soup just before serving. Taste and add salt and pepper if needed.



Blanched for just a minute and tossed with pesto, zucchini noodles are transformed to a pasta-like dish.



#### Zucchini "Noodles"

Toss these slender zucchini noodles, hot or cold, with a pesto (see the Mint & Basil Pesto recipe, right) or a vinaigrette and serve them as a side dish or salad. Or combine them with cooked linguine for a delicious summer supper. Yields 4 cups cooked noodles; serves four as a side dish.

4 large zucchini (about 10 oz. each) 1 tsp. salt

To slice by hand—Trim the ends of the zucchini and cut them lengthwise into ¼-inch slices. Stack the slices and slice lengthwise again into ¼-inch strips to make noodles. Work your way around the pulpy, seedy center of the zucchini, which should be discarded.

Slicing with a mandoline—Adjust the mandoline for the julienne blade. Slice the zucchini on the mandoline in slow, smooth strokes to form long, slender noodles. Rotate the zucchini after every two or three passes to avoid the seedy core. When you've sliced the zucchini on all sides, throw the core away.

Pile the zucchini in a colander and carefully toss it with the salt. Set the colander in the sink and let the zucchini drain for 30 min. Bring a large pot of water to a rolling boil. Add the zucchini and blanch until just tender, about 1 min. Drain the zucchini thoroughly.

**To serve hot**—Toss the zucchini with the dressing and serve immediately.

To serve cold—Rinse the zucchini under cold water and drain very thoroughly before tossing it with the dressing.

#### Mint & Basil Pesto

This pesto is delicious tossed with hot or cold noodles, zucchini or otherwise. *Yields 1 cup*.

3 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil
1 large clove garlic
Salt
½ cup tightly packed fresh basil leaves
½ cup tightly packed fresh mint leaves
2 Tbs. toasted pistachio nuts
½ cup grated Parmesan cheese
½ tsp. brown sugar
4 tsp. balsamic vinegar
½ tsp. freshly ground black pepper

In a food processor, blend the olive oil, garlic, and a pinch of salt almost smooth. Add the basil, mint, pistachios, and cheese; blend until the herbs are chopped fine but not puréed. Dissolve the brown sugar in the vinegar; add it to the pesto. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

#### Batter-Fried Zucchini & Their Blossoms

This batter creates a coating that's both tender and crisp. Serves six to eight as an appetizer.

2 eggs
1 bottle (1¼ cups) good-quality beer or ale
1 cup all-purpose flour; more for dredging
1 cup cornstarch
1 tsp. balsamic vinegar
1 tsp. salt
Pinch cayenne
Peanut oil for deep-frying
24 baby zucchini or 3 medium zucchini
24 zucchini blossoms

For the batter—Beat the eggs and beer together. Whisk in the flour and cornstarch; the mixture should have the consistency of pancake batter. Add the vinegar, salt, and cayenne. Set aside.

In a tall pot, heat 3 inches of peanut oil to 375°F.

Leave baby zucchini whole; cut medium zucchini into sticks about 3 inches long and ½ inch square. Dredge the zucchini in flour. Trim the flowers from their stems and remove the thistle-like protrusions at the base of each blossom.

Plunge the baby zucchini or zucchini sticks into the batter and use a slotted spoon or coarse strainer to remove them. Immediately drop the zucchini into the hot oil in batches. As soon as they surface, quickly batter the blossoms and add them to the oil. Don't overcrowd the pot or the oil temperature will drop. Gently move the squash in the oil so that they cook evenly and don't stick together. When they're crisp and golden brown (after 3 to 5 min.), remove the zucchini and blossoms. Drain them on a cooling rack set over paper towels. Sprinkle with salt and serve immediately.

Loretta Keller is the chef/owner of Bizou in San Francisco. ◆



Zucchini is fast and flexible. "The fastestgrowing vegetable in the garden is also one of the most versatile," says author Loretta Keller.

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Baker Leslie Mackie rolls the dough by hand to give the bread its homey shape and great texture. If you're in a hurry, roll it out with a pasta machine.

ne of the most popular breads at my bakery is a cracker-thin flatbread that's fragrant with rosemary, painted with fruity olive oil, and sprinkled with coarse salt. I've seen customers so impatient for it that they start eating the bread before I've even had a chance to hand them their change.

With no yeast or other leavening, this is a good bread for impatient bakers as well. A few ingredients are combined and briefly kneaded. The dough needs to rest for an hour before it's rolled out, but there's no waiting for it torise. The rolled dough then bakes for just a few minutes. Because they're so thin, the flatbreads cool quickly and are ready to eat minutes after they've come out of the oven.

#### THE SECRET INGREDIENT: SEMOLINA

Semolina flour, milled from the heart of hard durum wheat, gives the flatbread its sweet, almost cornlike flavor, rich golden color, and pleasingly coarse texture. But semolina's high gluten content means that the dough must be handled gently. This is not a bread dough to slap against the work table. Overmix it or knead it too rigorously and your flatbread will be tough rather than crisp.

## Making Rustic

Infused with fresh rosemary and rolled parchment thin, these crisp, fragrant breads satisfy impatient appetites

BY LESLIE MACKIE

Specialty grains like semolina are much easier to buy now than they were only a few years ago. You can find semolina in supermarkets, in Italian and Middle Eastern groceries, and in health-food stores. You can also order semolina by phone by calling the Butte Creek Mill in Oregon (541/826-3531) or Dean & DeLuca in New York City (800/221-7714).

#### A FAMILIAR WAY TO MIX INGREDIENTS

If you've ever made fresh pasta, you'll be acquainted with the process for making this dough. Begin by combining the dry ingredients in a large mixing bowl and making a well. Into this well, pour the water and olive oil, and then pull the dry

Semolina flour gives the bread its sweet flavor, golden color, and coarse texture.

ingredients into the wet ones with a fork until they're all well combined.

Because the dough requires only a few minutes of kneading, I knead right in the mixing bowl, which keeps me from dirtying another work surface. As soon as the dough is smooth—after no more than three minutes of kneading—I cover it with plastic wrap and chill it for at least an hour to allow the gluten time to relax.



Fragrant rosemary, fruity olive oil, and coarse salt give these flatbreads an irresistible flavor. An irregular shape contributes to a homemade look.

#### ROLLING BY HAND GIVES THE BREAD A BETTER TEXTURE

At the bakery, I don't have the time to roll each bread by hand, so I rely on a pasta machine, running pieces of the dough through the machine until they reach the proper thinness. But I prefer the uneven texture of hand-rolled flatbreads, which usually come out wider and with a more interesting texture.

For the crispest flatbreads, roll the dough as thin as you can without overworking it, which would develop the gluten and make the bread tough. The trick is to work quickly, rolling each piece of dough out from the center and rotating it slightly after each stroke of your rolling pin. If the dough starts to stick, turn it over, but use as little flour on your work surface as you can get away with. Working additional flour into the dough will also toughen the bread.

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### Rosemary Flatbread

Aim to make each bread consistently thin. Don't roll the edges too thin and leave the centers too thick or the breads will bake unevenly. The breads can be any size you like, just be sure they'll fit on your baking stone. The ones shown here are about eight inches in diameter.

#### **FLATBREADS BAKE FAST**

Once rolled, the dough goes straight into the hot oven. An unglazed baking stone is essential for making crisp flatbreads. The stone dispenses heat evenly and absorbs moisture from the dough, ensuring that the breads bake quickly and crisp uniformly. You can buy unglazed clay stones at most cookware stores or you can order one from King Arthur Flour Baker's Catalogue (800/827-6836).

Transferring the dough to the baking stone takes a bit of practice. Use both hands or a widespatula (see Notes, p. 16) to lay the dough onto the stone. If the dough folds onto itself, let it bake for a few minutes and then try unfolding it. After you bake the first two or three, you'll get a feel for handling the dough. As the breads bake, they'll bubble

and turn a rich golden brown. Within 8 to 10 minutes, the flatbreads are done. Cool them on a rack, brush them with olive oil, and sprinkle them with coarse salt. They'll keep for a day or two, though the olive oil tends to become less attractive after the first day. If you want to bake flatbreads one day to serve the next, oil and salt them the day you plan to

Flatbreads are rustic breads. They aren't meant to be perfectly shaped. Each one looks different, and that's part of their charm.

eat them.

#### **Rosemary Flatbread**

As you roll out these breads, use as little flour on the work surface as you can get away with to keep the dough from sticking: too much will make the breads tough. Flour amounts are listed by weight (ounces) and by volume (cups). Use either measurement. Yields about twenty 8-inch-diameter flatbreads.

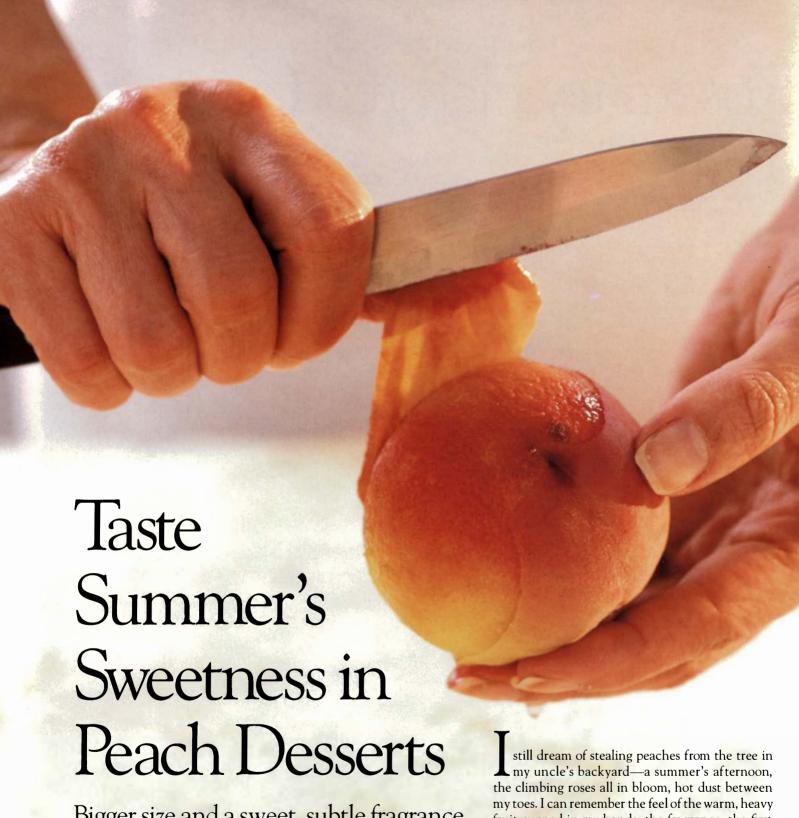
18 oz. (3 cups) semolina flour 131/2 oz. (3 cups) unbleached white flour 2 tsp. kosher salt; more for the finished breads 3 Tbs. chopped fresh rosemary 12/3 cups water

1/2 cup extra-virgin olive oil; more for the

Put a baking stone in the oven and heat the oven to 450°F. Work with one 21/2-oz. piece of dough (about the size of a large egg) at a time; keep the rest of the dough covered. On a very lightly floured surface, flatten a piece of dough with the palm of your hands and roll it out as thin as possible. Transfer the rolled dough directly to the stone in the hot oven and bake until crisp and light golden brown, 8 to 10 min. Let cool slightly. Brush with olive oil and sprinkle with salt.

Leslie Mackie bakes rosemary flatbread





Bigger size and a sweet, subtle fragrance signal the most succulent fruit of the season

TEXT BY SALLY SMALL; RECIPES BY KATHLEEN STEWART

fruit cupped in my hands, the fragrance, the first stolen bite, the sweet juice running down my chin.

#### **HOW TO PICK A PEACH**

Is your mouth already watering? Summer is here how do you find a good peach? My friends who are peach growers have provided me with some insights. Peaches are drupes (a type of fruit whose hard single seed is surrounded by soft flesh), and they're among the most difficult fruit to pick. The





An almond-paste filling is a delicious foil to the sweet acidity of the peaches. Spoon the filling into the hole left by the pit before baking the peaches with a late-harvest Riesling wine.

For easier peeling, drop the peaches in boiling water for 30 to 60 seconds and then plunge them into cold water. The peel should then come off easily. peaches ripen unevenly on the tree, with the fruit at the top ripening first. Peaches must be plucked gently when the background color of the skin at the stem end is a warm golden yellow, or a creamy white, in the case of white peaches.

Picking peaches without bruising them is a nearly impossible task for harvesters as they stand on shaky ladders in a peach orchard. For the rest of us, it's easier. Our peaches come already picked. But the rule is the same: *don't pinch the peaches!* Handle them as if you were wearing white cotton gloves. (The peach pickers do.)

Choose peaches with your hands, eyes, and nose. The fruit should be firm. The only soft places will be the bruises left by other people pinching the peach before you got there. A ripe peach feels heavy in the palm of your hand; it will give a little, feel more voluptuous. Look for the golden or creamy background color of the skin at the stem end of the peach. Don't be duped by a provocative blush color (varieties are being developed that are nearly 90% blush). The background color of the skin is all-important.

**Size is crucial, too.** Bigger *is* better when it comes to peaches. Bigger peaches seem to be sweeter, more

fully developed in flavor. Sniff the peach you're considering: you can smell the nectar in a riper peach.

Problem peaches. Supermarket peaches often fail us because they're smaller, picked greener, and stored longer. When you taste a mealy peach, you know it has been off the tree too long and has dehydrated in storage. When a peach looks perfect at the store and collapses into brown rot the moment you get it home, the orchard has suffered from too much water—a late rain, perhaps, or too much humidity.

#### **COAX YOUR PEACHES TO RIPENESS**

You can ripen peaches in a brown paper bag or a ripening bowl, but remember that peaches are a pleasure for all the senses, not just taste. Put them in a bowl on your kitchen table where you'll enjoy looking at them and they won't be forgotten. If you've picked firm, ripe fruit with good background color at the stem end, the peaches will soften in three or four days, and a lovely fragrance will beckon you. They'll keep in the refrigerator for a couple of days longer.

#### LATE-SEASON PEACHES ARE BEST FOR BAKING

During the last weeks of June, white peaches and the early yellow varieties arrive in stores. These first peaches of the season are low in acid and have a clear, sweet taste that makes them perfect for eating out of hand, but bakers should wait a month or so before they start rolling out their pie dough. Later varieties have a higher acid-to-sugar ratio, which gives the fruit more depth and complexity. Midto late-season peaches can stand up to stronger accompanying flavors and are the best choice for baking and using in desserts. In mid-August, start looking for the dark-fleshed Indian or blood peaches. Though usually smaller and not as juicy as their summer cousins, these peaches have a rich, almost berry-like flavor that's unsurpassable for cooking. You can usually count on finding ripe peaches in markets until the end of September.

Although the bulk of the commercial peach crop comes from California, peaches grow all over the country. The trees need only some cold winter weather to set the fruit and some hot summer weather to help it grow to full size. As with all produce, peaches that grow closest to your home should be your first choice. They'll be fresher and will not have been subjected to as much handling as those that come from a more distant locale.

All peaches are classified as either freestone or cling. The flesh of a cling peach clutches at the stone of the fruit, while freestone varieties relinquish their seed more readily. You'll rarely find cling peaches at the market: their firm flesh holds up well when cooked and is prized by commercial canners,





Toss the sugared peaches with flour before adding them to the tart. The flour will thicken the juices from the peaches and help keep the crust crisp.

who snatch most of the clings for themselves. The peaches you find at the grocery or farmers' market are almost always freestones.

Peach varieties are myriad and fleeting. Each variety in a geographic zone has a two-week window, more or less, in the market. Depending on where you live, you'll find peaches with names like Red Haven, Elberta, O'Henry, Georgia Belle, and Sun Crest. Learn the names of your local varieties, as well as the names of the growers or shippers. (By law, these must be printed on the box your green-

grocer buys.) You'll begin to find your own favorites, and a good produce person will warm to your interest.

Don't be duped by a peach with a provocative blush: it's the background color of the skin that's important.

#### **COOKING WITH PEACHES**

When preparing peaches for cooking, the trick is to remove the skin while keeping as much flesh as you can on the peach. The best way to do this is to quickly blanch the peaches before you peel them. Bring a large pot of water to a boil. While the water heats, cut an X into the bottom of each peach. Drop the peaches into the boiling water and cook just until the skin begins to loosen, 30 to 60 seconds. Drain the peaches and then plunge them into cold water to stop them from cooking fur-

ther. The peel should slip right off.

To slice a peach, run a small knife from stem to tip, cutting right through to the pit. Turn the peach in your hand, making one cut after another and let the slices fall into a bowl. Once exposed to the air, peach flesh tends to turn brown quickly. To keep the color bright, sprinkle the slices with a bit of lemon juice.

**Pair peaches with flavors both sweet and tart.** Peaches are especially well paired with sour cherries

and raspberries. Either of these red fruits brings a tart contrast to the delicacy of the peaches. Almonds, with their aromatic undertones, are also a delicious match for peaches. The sweet acidity of a ripe peach cries out for the richness of cream. Serve fresh slices with mascarpone, *crème fraîche*, ice cream, or just a pour of thick, fresh cream. Caramel, too, is a good match for the tartness of a peach. Bourbon, port, and sweet dessert wines, like the late-harvest Riesling used in one of the recipes here, are also all delicious partners for peaches.

#### Peaches with Dried-Cherry Shortcake

Later in the year, when ripe peaches are just a memory, you can serve these shortcakes plain as a breakfast pastry. Serves six.

#### FOR THE SHORTCAKES:

9 oz. (2 cups) flour

3 Tbs. sugar; more for sprinkling

1 Tbs. baking powder

1/4 tsp. baking soda

½ tsp. salt

1/3 cup chopped dried cherries

3 oz. (6 Tbs.) chilled unsalted butter, cut into small pieces

1 egg yolk

3/4 cup cream; more for brushing

#### FOR THE PEACHES:

6 large ripe peaches, peeled and cut into ¾-inch slices (about 6 cups)

1 Tbs. sugar

#### FOR THE WHIPPED CREAM:

1½ cups heavy cream 2 Tbs. sugar

Make the shortcakes—Heat the oven to 375°F. In a mixing bowl, combine the flour, sugar, baking powder, baking soda, salt, and cherries. With a pastry blender or two knives, cut the butter into the dry ingredients until the mixture resembles coarse crumbs. Beat the egg yolk into the cream and stir this into the flour and butter mixture just until all the dry ingredients are moistened.

A cornmeal crust gives this tart a homev look and texture. Brush the surface with cream and sprinkle with sugar for a lovely sheen.

Crisp on the outside

and creamy in the

center. The almond-

paste filling bakes to a

Turn out the dough onto a floured board and press it into a rectangle about 1 inch thick. With a 2-inch biscuit cutter, stamp out 6 shortcakes. Brush the tops of the shortcakes with cream and sprinkle with sugar. Set them on an ungreased baking sheet and bake until puffy and brown, 20 to 25 min. Let cool on a wire rack.

Prepare the peaches—Toss the peaches with the sugar; set aside.

Whip the cream—Combine the heavy cream and sugar and whip until the cream holds soft peaks.

Assemble the shortcakes—Split the shortcakes in half. Set the bottom halves on serving plates. Spoon the peaches over the shortcake bottoms. Top them with whipped cream and the remaining shortcake halves.

#### **Peach Tart**

This cornmeal pastry is quite fragile, but don't worry if it falls apart when you transfer it to the pan. The dough is easily patched, and the finished tart is meant to look rustic. Yields one 9-inch tart; serves six to eight.

FOR THE PASTRY:

6 oz. (12 Tbs.) unsalted butter, slightly softened 1 cup sugar 4 egg yolks 9 oz. (2 cups) flour

3/3 cup cornmeal or polenta



FOR THE FILLING:

6 large ripe peaches, peeled and cut into 3/4-inch slices (about 6 cups)

1/4 cup sugar 2 Tbs. flour

FOR THE GLAZE:

Cream

Sugar for sprinkling

Make the pastry—With an electric mixer, cream together the butter and sugar just until fluffy. Add the egg yolks and beat until well combined. Add the flour, cornmeal, and salt and continue mixing just until the dough comes together. Divide the dough into two pieces. Cover with plastic wrap and let rest briefly in the refrigerator.

Make the filling—Toss the peach slices with the sugar. Let the peaches drain in a colander before tossing them with the flour. (Too much peach liquid in a covered, baked pastry dessert can make the pastry limp. If you like, save the drippings for another use, such as a sorbet.)

Assemble the tart—Heat the oven to 350°F. Roll one piece of dough into a 8-inch round, fit it into a 9-inch tart pan, and press it up the sides of the pan with your fingertips. Add the peaches. Roll the remaining dough into a 9-inch round and lay it on top of the peaches. Press the edges of the two pieces of dough together and flatten them against the edge of the pan; trim any excess. Brush the dough's surface with a little cream and sprinkle with sugar. Set the tart pan on a baking sheet and bake until light golden brown, about 1 hour. Let cool before removing from the pan.

#### **Baked Stuffed Peaches with** a Late-Harvest Riesling Sauce

Almonds and peaches complement each other perfectly. Here, baked in sweet late-harvest Riesling, they make a dessert that's absolutely luxurious. Serves six.

4 oz. almond paste, preferably a firm stylelike Solo brand 1 oz. (2 Tbs.) unsalted butter, slightly softened

2 Tbs. sugar

1 egg white

2 Tbs. flour

6 ripe peaches, peeled, halved, and pitted

2 cups late-harvest Riesling or other white dessert wine

Make the filling—Cream together the almond paste, butter, and sugar until light and fluffy. Beat in the egg white and the flour until well combined.

Bake the peaches—Heat the oven to 350°F. Fill the hole left by the pit in each peach with some of the almondpaste mixture. Put the peaches in a baking dish, stuffed side up, add the wine, and bake until the peaches are tender and the filling is lightly browned, about 25 min. Remove the pan from the oven and, with a slotted spoon, transfer the peaches to serving plates.

Make the sauce—Pour the liquid left in the baking dish into a stainless-steel saucepan and, over medium-high heat, reduce the liquid by half. You should have 1½ cups liquid; drizzle some of it around the peaches and serve.

Sally Small picks her peaches in Walnut Grove, California. Kathleen Stewart bakes peach desserts at the Downtown Bakery in Healdsburg, California.

The homemade ketchup we put on every table is a symbol of that mission. Its main ingredient—tomatoes—is indigenous to America, and the condiment has become a part of

the fabric of American cookery. On a more practical level, our customers love it. We see them using it during every meal, dunking onion rings into it, pouring it on omelets, even spreading it on bread for a section of the cookers.

ketchup sandwich.

Compared to the overly sweet, processed product, our ketchup has a zesty, fresh flavor that's as vibrant as salsa yet right at home on a hamburger. It's also easy to make,

requiring little more than stirring.

Charred onions add a sweet-smoky

flavor to the ketchup.

Don't be afraid to let

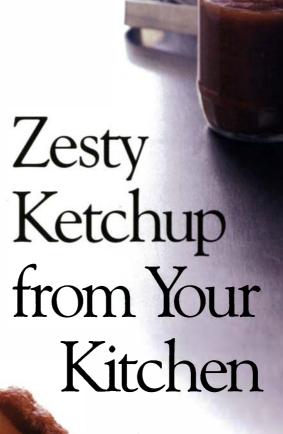
them blacken.

#### **KETCHUP'S LONG TRADITION**

The origin of ketchup is not clear. Some food historians believe ketchup comes from the Spanish *escabeche*, a marinade or sauce for pickling. Others say it's derived from the Indonesian *ketjap*, a thick, slightly sweetened soy sauce. Certainly, ketchup-like condiments made from ingredients such as walnuts and mushrooms existed in England for many centuries before the concept was married to the New World's tomatoes, but there are those who consider ketchup a purely American innovation.

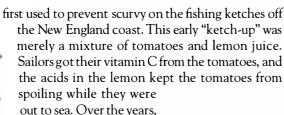
According to the authors of Bull Cook and Authentic Historical Recipes & Practices Vol. II, a book of food lore privately published in 1968, American ketchup was

Homemade ketchup cries out for onion rings, but you should also try it with omelets, grilled chicken, meatloaf, and shellfish. It takes a lot of tomatoes to make good ketchup. The authors prefer to use canned tomatoes for consistency and convenience.



As vibrant as salsa and just as easy to make

BY DAVID PAGE & BARBARA SHINN



as ketchup's ingredient list expanded, people on shore developed a taste for it. Eventually, H. J. Heinz made ketchup a household condiment for meats and other foods.

Unfortunately, the

ketchup selection at most supermarkets is limited to just a few overly processed products. So about eight years ago, while working as a chef in California, David began making his own. The result is a fresh, delicious ketchup that's easy to make.

#### MAKING KETCHUP IS A MATTER OF SLOW COOKING AND STIRRING

There are just a few ingredients to prepare before cooking your ketchup. Charring the onions on a grill or under a broiler adds a smoky complexity to the ketchup. We toast the coriander, cumin, and mustard seeds before adding them to bring out their flavors. The remaining ingredients are more traditional: the vinegar adds an acidic touch, the capers a bit of tang, the hot sauce a little heat, and the other spices character.

#### Canned tomatoes mean convenience.

Many people ask us if we use fresh tomatoes in our ketchup, and they seem a little disappointed when we tell them that we prefer to use canned tomatoes. We envy anyone with a big crop of garden tomatoes to use in their ketchup, but for those of us without a bushel or two of tomatoes, a goodquality canned tomato provides a consistent and reliable flavor. (We only use organically grown canned tomatoes.) In our experience, fresh-from-the-garden tomatoes don't really benefit from the long cooking that ketchup requires.

Pay attention to the ketchup while it cooks. You don't need to hover over the pot, but a good stir now and again breaks up the tomatoes, distributes the spices, and keeps the bottom from scorching. We believe that the more attention paid to stirring, the better the ketchup tastes.

To stir the large batches of ketchup we make, we have a special tool that looks like a canoe paddle and is available in some kitchen stores. Once a

week, we make a large batch of ketchup and seal it in mason jars so our customers can take some home. You may want to can your ketchup as well. It makes a great gift, and it will last for at least a year unopened without refrigeration. If you don't can the

ketchup, it will still last for a couple of months in the refrigerator.

Once it's opened, you'll want to use your ketchup for far more than the traditional hamburgers and french fries. Try it on roasted sweet potatoes, grilled chicken, omelets, portobello mushroom sandwiches, and meatloaf.

This ketchup also makes a great base for homemade cocktail sauce and Russian dressing.

#### Ketchup from "Home"

This recipe makes a lot of ketchup, but it will keep for months in the refrigerator and even longer if you can it. The recipe is easily multiplied and divided. Yields 3 quarts.

2 Tbs. olive oil 2 large onions, sliced about 3/3 inch-thick 1 tsp. coriander seeds 1 tsp. cumin seeds

1 tsp. mustard seeds

1 cup red-wine vinegar 1/3 cup plus 1 Tbs. packed brown sugar (1/4 lb.)

1 head garlic, cloves separated and peeled

1/4 cup capers with their brine

1/4 cup hot sauce 3/4 tsp. paprika

Charred onions, toasted

spices, and tangy capers

all add character

to the ketchup.

3/4 tsp. around cinnamon

3/4 tsp. ground allspice

3/4 tsp. ground ainaer

3/4 tsp. dried oregano

3/4 tsp. freshly ground black pepper

3/4 tsp. ground cardamom

Salt to taste

Three 28-oz. cans whole tomatoes

Two 12-oz. cans tomato paste

Lightly oil the onion slices and grill or broil them until blackened, about 15 min. per side.

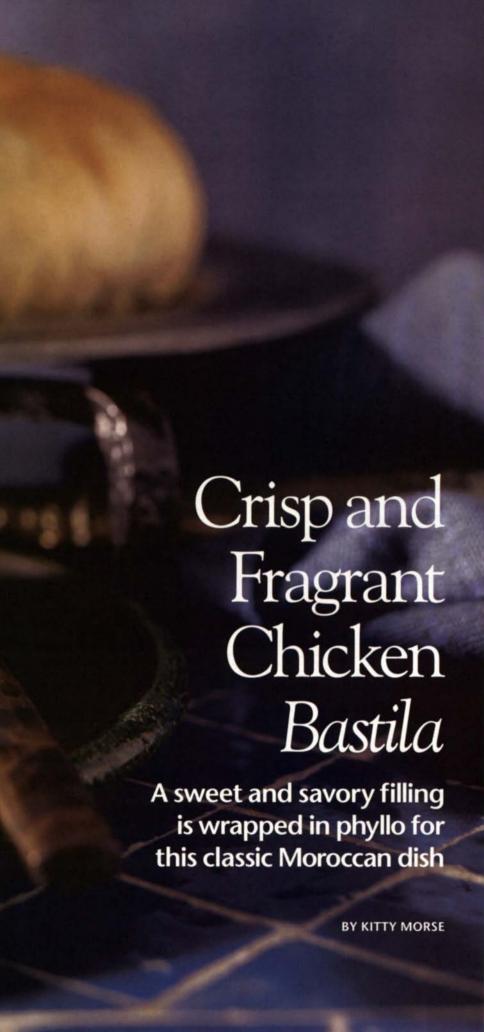
In a small, dry, heavy-based skillet, toast the coriander, cumin, and mustard seeds over medium heat until fragrant, about 5 min. Grind the toasted spices in a mortar and pestle or a spice grinder.

Put all the ingredients in a deep, heavy-based, nonreactive pot. Simmer the ketchup over low heat for about 3 hours, stirring it every 15 min. to break up the tomatoes and to keep the ketchup from sticking to the bottom of the pot. The mixture should thicken.

Purée the ketchup in batches in a blender or food processor. If the puréed ketchup seems too thin, continue cooking it until it's reduced to a consistency you like.

David Page and Barbara Shinn own Home Restaurant in New York City, where David cooks many wonderful dishes, some of which taste even better with ketchup. •





was born and raised in Morocco. I still have a home there and visit regularly, sometimes leading a culinary tour. I like the fact that people view Morocco as a romantic, exotic place because that's just what this North African country is. But I don't want people to think that Moroccan food is so exotic that they could never make the dishes in their own kitchens. While the food is absolutely wonderful, it is also very straightforward.

The bastila is a perfect example of what I mean. A wonderfully fragrant stew that's wrapped in a delicate dough, it's one of the most refined of Moroccan dishes, but it is really quite easy to make.

The traditional filling for *bastila* (pronounced bahs-TEE-lah) was pigeon, but chicken is now more likely. The chicken is simmered in a fragrant sauce flavored



"Bastila is elegant yet easy to make," says author Kitty Morse.

with saffron, ginger, cilantro, and other herbs and spices.

The cooked chicken is removed from the pan and boned. The remaining sauce is lightly sweetened with confectioners' sugar. Other Moroccan main dishes can be sweet, made so with prunes or figs, for example, but the addition of confectioners' sugar is unique to *bastila*. The sweetness complements the dish's savory flavor without overwhelming it.

The use of softly scrambled eggs to bind and thicken the filling is also unique to the *bastila*. The beaten eggs, which are mixed in the hot liquid until softly scrambled, add texture but just a subtle flavor to the filling. The filling is nestled between sheets of a paper-thin dough,

which is sprinkled with a mixture of ground almonds, cinnamon, and confectioners' sugar. The result is a pastry that's savory yet slightly sweet.

#### PHYLLO MAKES A FLAKY CRUST

The traditional dough is called ouarka

(pronounced WAR-kah), which is paper-thin and has a texture somewhere between Greek phyllo and Chinese egg-roll skins. Making ouarka is an art that requires years of experience. In Morocco, the task is generally delegated to freelance ouarka specialists. Seated before their charcoal braziers, they perform their culi-

nary wizardry, creating sheets of dough as thin and light as onion skins. Though *ouarka* is sold in some markets in Morocco, it isn't commercially available in the United States.

Prepared phyllo makes an excellent substitute for the bastila's traditional dough. Phyllo, thin sheets of dough used in Mideastern cooking and available

frozen in supermarkets, is pliable enough to shape around the filling and has a texture when baked that's similar to *ouarka*. Phyllo (sometimes spelled *filo* or *fillo*) makes an easy substitute for *ouarka*, but you do need to take some care when working with the thin sheets of dough.

Defrost phyllo in the refrigerator; thawing it at

room temperature creates moisture that may cause the sheets to stick together.



A light coating of butter gives the dough its crisp texture and great flavor. Paint on the melted butter with a pastry brush.

When working with phyllo, keep the sheets you're not using covered with plastic wrap and topped with a clean, slightly damp towel to keep the phyllo from drying out. Each time you pull a sheet from the stack, cover the remaining sheets with the towel.

Though phyllo has a tendency to turn brittle when exposed to air, don't be intimidated when working with it. As you layer it to create the *bastila*'s crust, you'll be brushing melted butter onto it. This not only crisps the phyllo while it bakes, but it also keeps the sheets pliable as you work with them. If your phyllo does tear, simply use small, buttered pieces to patch the rip. No one will be able to tell the difference once the pastry is baked.

Shape the *bastila* into its traditional round shape by cutting the rectangular sheets of phyllo into rounds. The layers of pastry are assembled so that the final dish looks like a puffy, round pillow.

#### SAVOR THE SCENT BEFORE SERVING

Because *bastila* is traditionally a specialoccasion dish, I often serve it at the start of a celebratory meal. The arrival of a plump, beautiful *bastila* to the table never fails to elicit murmurs of appreciation from guests attending a *diffa*, a feast celebrating a special occasion. As soon as the *bastila* is served, the host quickly pierces the crust in several places to allow the fragrant steam to escape, tantalizing the senses of those guests seated nearby.

Bastila is also hearty enough to serve as a main course, but I suggest that you serve it on its own with a salad either before or after. The varied and complex

### Making the traditional Moroccan dough called *ouarka*

Bastila owes

much to the

exquisite, flaky

texture of its

paper-thin

dough.



In Moroccan cities, it isn't unusual to see ouarka, the paper-thin dough traditionally used in making bastila, being prepared by freelance ouarka makers. A large, round copper pan, called a t'bsil dial ouarka, is set upside down over hot coals on a brazier and dabbed with a thin, wheat-flour dough to create small, overlapping circles. The ouarka is then deftly peeled from the pan.



**Layers of phyllo create the sides of bastila.** Turn up the edges of the phyllo so that they partially cover the filling.



A few tucks keep the bastila together. Fold the top sheets of phyllo under the bottom ones as if you were tucking in bedsheets.

flavors don't need to be muddled with other foods on the same plate.

Bastila freezes well. I often make several at a time, baking and serving one and freezing the others, uncooked, for later use. They'll keep for up to two months when frozen and can go straight from the freezer into the oven.

#### Classic Chicken Bastila

Though the filling should be thick, use a slotted spoon to transfer it to the phyllo, leaving any excess liquid behind. *Yields one* 10-inch bastila; serves six.

#### FOR THE FILLING:

2 Tbs. vegetable oil
1 medium onion, chopped fine
6 skinless chicken thighs (about 2 lb. total)
3 skinless chicken breast halves (about 1 lb. total)
½ cup finely chopped flat-leaf parsley
⅓ cup finely chopped fresh cilantro
¼ tsp. turmeric
8 threads saffron, preferably Spanish
1 cup water
1 tsp. ground ginger
1¼ tsp. ground cinnamon
1 tsp. salt
½ tsp. freshly ground black pepper
½ cup confectioners' sugar

FOR ASSEMBLING THE BASTILA: 3 oz. (about ½ cup) whole blanched almonds ¼ cup confectioners' sugar 1 tsp. ground cinnamon

3 large eggs, lightly beaten

12 sheets phyllo dough 4 oz. (8 Tbs.) butter, melted Confectioners' sugar and cinnamon for dusting

Heat the oven to 425°F. In a large, heavy-based saucepan, heat the oil over medium heat. Cook the onion until translucent, stirring occasionally, about 8 min. Add the chicken, parsley, cilantro, turmeric, saffron, water, ginger, and cinnamon. Cover and cook over medium-low heat until the chicken is tender, 20 to 25 min. With a slotted spoon, transfer the chicken to a bowl and set it aside. Simmer the sauce that's left in the pan until it is reduced by half, about 12 min. Mix in the salt, pepper, sugar, and eggs. Stir continuously until the eggs are softly scrambled, about 5 min.

When the chicken is cool enough to handle, pull the meat off the bones and cut it into ½-inch chunks. Return the meat to the pan with the sauce and stir to mix.

In a blender or food processor, grind the almonds coarse. Transfer the almonds to a small bowl and mix them with the sugar and cinnamon. Set the mixture aside.

Put 12 sheets of phyllo on a cutting board. Using a 12-inch round pizza pan or similar sized circle as a template, cut the stack of phyllo sheets into rounds by tracing the outside of the pan with a sharp knife. Discard the phyllo scraps. Keep the phyllo rounds covered with plastic wrap and a slightly dampened towel when not using.

Using a pastry brush, paint the pizza pan or baking sheet with some melted butter. Put one of the phyllo rounds on the pan and brush it with butter. Repeat with two more rounds, buttering each. Sprinkle the top round lightly and evenly with half of the almond mixture. Layer and butter three more rounds on top of the first three. Spread the chicken mixture evenly over the top of the sixth layer, leaving  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inches of phyllo uncovered around the perimeter. Fold the edge of the phyllo rounds up and partially over the chicken mixture.

Layer and butter three more rounds of phyllo over the chicken mixture, sprinkling the remaining almond mixture evenly over the top of the third layer. Layer and butter the remaining three rounds of phyllo and tuck the edges of all six rounds under the first six rounds. Generously butter the top layer.

Bake the *bastila* until it turns a deep golden brown, 30 to 35 min. Sprinkle evenly and lightly with confectioners' sugar. Sprinkle the cinnamon over the top of the *bastila*. Serve immediately.

Kitty Morse lives in a casbah her husband built in southern California. She has written five cookbooks, including The California Farm Cookbook (Pelican, 1994) and the forthcoming The Vegetarian Table: North Africa (Chronicle, 1996). ◆



#### Wine Choices

#### For bastila's sweetness and spice, look to off-dry whites or bubblies

Rich and fragrant, Moroccan bastila works well with an off-dry Gewürztraminer because of the sweetness and spice they share. Try Thomas Fogarty from California or anything German.

If you prefer Chardonnay, choose carefully. Chardonnay often

has flavors of fruit, butter, and nuts—good partners all for *bastila*. Louis M. Martini of Napa and Hogue Cellars in Washington make fine examples.

But too dry a Chardonnay can be thrown out of balance by bastila's sweetness. A good

sparkling wine delivers Chardonnay flavors, but with a touch of sweetness. And sparklers have pleasing yeasty flavors that connect well with phyllo. From California, I like Wente Vineyards' Brut: it's well balanced and priced right. Roederer Estate or Maison Deutz, and their French counterparts, Louis Roederer or Champagne Deutz, have more depth. They're pricier, sure—but you'll feel as if you're dining in a casbah. Rosina Tinari Wilson, a food and wine writer and teacher, is a contributing editor for Fine Cooking.

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# Pickles by the Pint

Turn a few cucumbers or a small bunch of beans into crunchy pickles with little time and effort

BY ANDREA CHESMAN



ickle-making used to be a big undertaking for me: mountains of vegetables, stacks of jars, steam to the rafters. So I came up with a quicker, simpler way to make just one or two jars at a time. Now when there are only a handful of cucumbers in my garden that are the right size for pickling, I go ahead and pick them. Working in small quantities also inspires me to experiment. If I don't like the pickles I've made, I'm not stuck with a pantry full of them.

If you can boil water, you can make pickles. Though there are certain steps to follow to ensure safety, there are no great challenges to making pickles. Basically, the jars are packed and processed in a boiling water bath to seal them; then they're left alone for several weeks as the flavors develop. The only hard part is waiting to eat them.

#### PICKING THE RIGHT PRODUCE TO PICKLE

When it comes to pickles, most people only think of cucumbers. But beets, green beans, chiles, and bell peppers also make excellent pickles, as do cauliflower pieces, sliced Jerusalem artichokes, okra, and green tomatoes. Some fruits, such as peaches, pears, and apples, also pickle well.

Choose fresh, firm, young produce for better pickles. Pickling cucumbers, also called Kirbys, are



A brief soak in salt water benefits cucumbers and other vegetables with a high water content. The salt draws out some of the excess water, making a firmer pickle.

best for pickling: their skin is less bitter, and they have fewer, smaller seeds. Don't use produce that's been coated with wax because pickling brine can't penetrate the wax barrier.

A cool cucumber (or bean or beet) makes a crisper pickle. If you're harvesting from your own garden, pick vegetables early in the morning (before they've been heated by the afternoon sun) and refrigerate them as soon as possible.

#### WHAT ELSE GOES IN A JAR OF PICKLES?

A brine made from vinegar, water, salt, and seasonings, such as garlic, herbs, and spices, turns your produce into pickles.

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A canning funnel makes adding the brine a splash-free task. Boiling vinegar is added first, followed by boiling water to cover the produce.

Vinegar is the key ingredient. Vinegar not only gives pickles their distinct, tart taste, but its acidity reduces the likelihood that naturally occurring yeasts, molds, and bacteria will spoil your pickles. As long as the vinegar is 4% to 6% acetic acid (which most commercial vinegars are), you can safely use it for making pickles.

I like to use distilled white vinegar for my pickles. I find it doesn't compete with the distinctive flavors of the herbs and spices in the brine. Cider vinegar contributes a rich, fruity flavor that works well with sweet pickles. I've found that red-wine and balsamic

vinegars discolor the brine and muddy the flavors. I thought white-wine vinegar would be wonderful for pickling, but it actually tastes flat.

Salt enhances the flavor of pickles. I use pickling salt, which is simply table salt without the additives that can turn a pickling liquid cloudy. If you can't find it, you can use any salt, such as kosher or sea salt, as long as it doesn't have any additives.

Use seasonings to vary the pickles' flavors. Dill is the queen of pickling herbs and the one most familiar to pickle-eaters. Tarragon, thyme, and basil are other good herbs for adding flavor to pickles. You may want to experiment with freshly sliced ginger and strips of orange zest, as well as allspice and seeds such as caraway, mustard, celery, and cumin. However you choose to flavor your pickles, be sure to use only whole spices: chopping them or crushing them will make the brine cloudy.

#### **TOOLS OF THE PICKLE-MAKING TRADE**

You'll need a few pieces of special equipment for pickling, including canning jars. The jar tops come in two pieces: a metal screw band and a flat metal lid. Jars and screw bands can be reused, but the flat lids will seal properly just once.

You can process your pickles in a 7- or 9-quart canner, or you can use a large pot, as long as it's tall enough to allow the jars to sit on a rack and be covered by 2 inches of water with at least 1 inch of space at the top to spare. If you don't have a canning rack, you can set some of your metal screw bands on the bottom of the pot and put the jars on top of them.

A few gadgets make life easier. A food processor saves time and cuts vegetables into uniform pieces. A wide-mouth canning funnel keeps things neat and is well worth its low cost, while a timer keeps you on schedule. Canning labels are good for dating your pickles, but freezer tape works fine.

#### **PROCESSING YOUR PICKLES**

If you only make a jar or two of pickles, you can store them unsealed in the refrigerator, but if you make a lot of pickles, this isn't a practical storage solution. To

#### Canning basics—keep the jars hot and pack them tight

1. Prepare the jars, screw bands, and lids. Wash them with hot, soapy water and rinse them well. Follow the manufacturer's directions for preparing the lids. If the jars will be processed for less than 10 minutes, they must be sterilized by immersion in boiling water for 10 minutes. The jars must be hot when you pack them; otherwise,

the boiling vinegar and water may cause them to shatter.

2. Pack the jars tightly, and then pour in the hot brine to cover the vegetables, allowing the specified amount of headspace (the space between the rim of the jar and its contents). Always be sure to include at least ½ cup vinegar and 1 teaspoon salt per pint.

3. Remove air bubbles by slowly raising and lowering a chopstick or a plastic blade around the inside of the jar. This is crucial: a trapped air bubble may shatter your jar as it heats. Add more brine to cover the vegetables, if necessary.

**4. Wipe the jar's rim** with a damp cloth before putting on the lid. Secure the lid with a screw band

tightened by hand into place.

5. Set the jars on a rack in a canner or pot that's half-filled with very hot water (but not boiling, which may cause the jars to break). Add more hot water, if necessary, to cover the jars with 2 inches of water. Cover the pot, turn the heat on high, and bring the water to a boil. When it starts



Time's up? Get the pickles out. The author uses a jar lifter, which is great for removing one jar at a time. The pickles must cool undisturbed for about 12 hours. A popping sound during cooling means the lid has sealed properly.

store your pickles at room temperature, you'll need to seal the jars in a boiling-water bath (see the sidebar below). This inactivates spoilage enzymes that affect the pickles' taste, color, and texture. Unfortunately, the process also cooks the pickles, making them less crisp and fresh tasting. The challenge is to keep your pickles crisp yet safe.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has set what it says is a safe processing time of 10 minutes, and you may want to follow those guidelines, which will yield perfectly acceptable pickles. I prefer to process pickles for 5 minutes, which gives me a crisper pickle with a brighter color.

Pickles need to sit for at least six weeks to develop their full flavor. Keep notes on what you did; the next time you may want to increase the amount of herbs or decrease the salt. What you must not do is alter the proportion of vinegar to other liquids in the brine; otherwise, you risk spoilage. If you find the pickles are too sour, increase the amount of sugar.

Make these pickles a jar at a time, or multiply them to meet the challenge of a big crop or the cravings of friends.

#### **Dill Chips**

For a crisp pickle, use small cucumbers and slice them thin. *Yields 1 pint*.

2 to 2¼ cups sliced cucumbers, about ¼ inch thick 2½ tsp. pickling salt 2 sprigs fresh dill, about 6 inches long, or 1 Tbs. dill seeds, or 1 head fresh dill 2 cloves garlic, cut in half ½ cup distilled white vinegar Boiling water

Combine the sliced cucumbers and  $1\frac{1}{2}$  tsp. of the pickling salt. Toss well. Cover with cold water and let stand for 2 to 3 hours. Drain.

In a clean, hot, 1-pint jar, put the dill, garlic, and remaining 1 tsp. pickling salt. Add the cucumber slices up

to the shoulder of the jar, tamping down as you pack. In a small stainless-steel saucepan, bring the vinegar to a boil and pour it over the cucumber slices. Top off with boiling water, leaving  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch of headspace. Process following the directions in the sidebar below.

#### Pickled Beets with an Orange Accent

Only ¼ cup vinegar is required in this recipe because the added sugar also acts as a preservative. *Yields 1 pint*.

Zest from one well-scrubbed orange, cut into thin strips 2 cups cooked beets, cut into strips 1 tsp. pickling salt ¼ cup sugar ¼ cup distilled white vinegar ¼ cup water

In a clean, hot, 1-pint jar, pack the orange zest and then the beets, leaving  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch headspace at the top of the jar. In a small stainless-steel saucepan, combine the salt, sugar, vinegar, and water and bring to a boil. Pour this over the beets, leaving  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch headspace. Process following the directions in the sidebar below.

#### **Garlic-Herb Green Beans**

Basil adds a subtle, summertime flavor to beans, but tarragon and dill are also delicious. *Yields 1 pint*.

1 tsp. pickling salt
2 cloves garlic, cut in half
1 sprig fresh basil (about 8 leaves), or two 6-inch sprigs tarragon or dill

2 cups (about ¼ lb.) green beans, trimmed to about 4 inches ¾ cup distilled white vinegar Boiling water

In a clean, hot, 1-pint jar, put the salt, garlic, and basil. Neatly pack in the beans so that all are standing upright. In a small, stainless-steel saucepan, bring the vinegar to a boil and pour it over the beans, Follow with boiling water to cover the beans, leaving  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch headspace. Process following the directions in the sidebar below.

#### **Pickled Chile Peppers**

I keep the spices simple because the chiles' heat intensifies and tends to overpower the seasoning. *Yields 1 pint*.

2 cups whole chiles, not more than 4 inches long 1½ tsp. mixed pickling spices 1 tsp. salt ½ cup distilled white vinegar Boiling water

Cut a small slit in each chile to allow the pickling brine to penetrate. In a clean, hot, 1-pint jar, put the pickling spices and salt. Tightly pack in the chiles, arranging them stem up. In a small, stainless-steel saucepan, bring the vinegar to a boil and pour it over the chiles. Follow with boiling water, leaving ½ inch headspace. Process following the directions in the sidebar at left.

Andrea Chesman is the author of Summer in a Jar: Making Pickles, Jams & More (Williamson, 1985). She lives in Ribton, Vermont. ◆

to boil (you'll have to peek), begin timing. See text above for recommended processing times. 6. Remove the jars immediately when the time is up. Let them

cool undisturbed for at least 12 hours. Never tighten the bands after the jars have been processed: this could break the seal.

7. Test the seals. After the jars

have cooled, gently remove the screw bands and test the seals by lifting the jar by its lid. (Do this over a towel to catch the jar if it hasn't sealed properly.)

8. Store sealed jars in a cool, dry place. Unsealed jars should be stored in the refrigerator and used quickly. Pickles should sit for at least six weeks, ideally eight.



MASTER CLASS

# Stuffing a Loin of Lamb

Roll the meat around a savory spinachsausage stuffing and brown the bones to make a heady sauce

BY DAVID WALTUCK

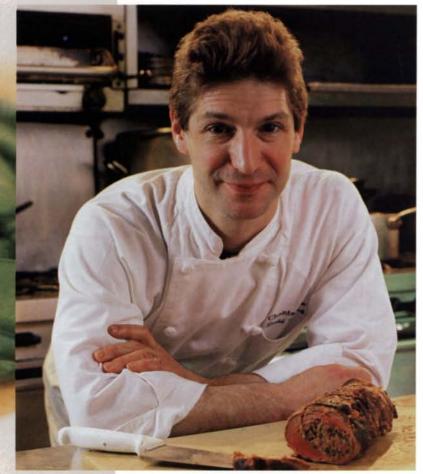


amb is the most popular item at my restaurant—I guess my own enthusiasm for it rubs off on the customers. My latest versions have played with Mediterranean, Middle Eastern, and North African themes. The rich, sweet flavor of lamb really shines next to strong seasonings, such as garlic, rosemary, cumin, olives, lemon, saffron, and thyme. I enjoy improvising with flavor, so a boned loin rolled around a savory stuffing and served with a stockbased sauce is ideal for me. And most of the work can be done ahead, just as we do at the restaurant—make the stuffing, stuff and roll the loin, prepare the sauce—with only the actual browning and roasting done at the last minute.

#### A ROLLED LOIN MEANS TENDER MEAT AND A COMPACT SHAPE

Call your butcher or supermarket and order half a saddle of lamb, boned and trimmed so that the loin and flank remain as one joined piece. You'll need the bones (chopped) and the trim for sauce, so make sure those are included. Ask for a couple of shank bones, too; they'll further boost the sauce's flavor.

There are two loins on every lamb. They're found below the rack and include the last rib down to the



"This is a great dish for a special dinner at home," says David Waltuck. "Almost all the work can be done ahead."

top of the hips. The backbone goes down the center and the loin meat is on either side. Loin size varies with the animal's age and species. To serve four to six people, buy a loin that weighs about four pounds before butchering.

A leg makes an easy-to-buy alternative. You can also make this dish using a boneless leg of lamb. Use the loin end of the leg rather than the shank end, which has tougher connective tissue in it. When made with a leg, this is a much more rustic dish. The final shape of your slices won't be nearly as neat and attractive as with the loin, nor will the meat be as buttery tender, but the flavor of the leg is delicious.

#### THE BONES MAKE AN INTENSE SAUCE

The fairly thin but intensely flavored sauce is made by reducing wine, stock, and seasonings with browned lamb bones and browned vegetables. Use the loin bones that the butcher has chopped for you, along with a few pieces of the trimmed meat. If you want to boost the flavor of your sauce a little, or if you're using a boneless leg of lamb, throw in a lamb shank or two.

Use a chicken or veal stock for the sauce. You might think you should use a lamb stock, but I find that lamb on lamb is just too strong. A mild chicken or veal stock provides enough richness and body and still lets the lamb flavor from the bones come through. I give the sauce a sharp kick by adding some brine from pungent kalamata olives. A little goes a long way, and I find that I don't actually need the olives themselves: they would be overkill. The flavor of the brine is enough. But do save those olives. Cover them with olive oil, fresh herbs, garlic, and pepper flakes. They'll taste great and keep for weeks.

#### A SIMPLE STUFFING WITH STRONG FLAVORS

The stuffing I use in this recipe is dead simple—just chopped fresh spinach, breadcrumbs, and merguez, a spicy lamb sausage. Making the stuffing is easy, as you can see from the photos on p. 64, and there are just a few points to keep in mind. First, be sure to



Brown the bones for a more intensely flavored sauce. Carrots, onions, and garlic needn't be peeled, because you'll strain the mixture later on.





Squeeze the spinach completely dry; otherwise, you'll end up with watery stuffing.



Brown the merguez (lamb sausage) just enough to release flavors and drippings; don't cook it through. The sausage will cook a second time when you brown and roast the loin—overcooked merguez results in a crumbly, dry stuffing.



Add the merguez to the spinach and breadcrumbs. Be sure to include all the tasty drippings—they'll help bind the stuffing.

squeeze all the moisture out of the chopped spinach, or you'll have a watery stuffing. Second, don't cook the sausage completely; heat it just enough to release a little of the natural fat, which will flavor and bind the other stuffing ingredients. If you cook the sausage thoroughly at this point, it will be too dry and crumbly when it cooks again inside the lamb.

Once you've combined all the ingredients for the stuffing, let the mixture cool completely before rolling the loin. For safety's sake, never put warm stuffing into a piece of raw meat.

#### TRUSSING MAKES EVEN SLICES THAT ARE EASY TO SERVE

Shape the sausage and spinach stuffing into a log the width of the boned loin. Roll the loin and stuffing into as neat a cylinder as you can manage. Keep in mind that the more even the shape, the more evenly it will cook. Tie the roll with kitchen

twine (I use a soft, thick butcher's twine) at regular intervals—about an inch apart. There are many ways to truss a roast, but for this dish, I use individual strings rather than a continuous looped string. This method works best at the restaurant, where I may just need to slice off one or two portions at a time, and I don't want the trussing to unravel. The result is prettier individual slices of lamb. This method also makes it easier to get the tension even throughout the length of the

roast, which is important both for restaurant and home. As with all trussing, you want the strings secure so they actually do some good, but not so tight that they pinch the meat or force out the stuffing. Sometimes you hear that you should truss tightly because the meat will shrink during cooking, which means the strings will suddenly become too loose.

That advice isn't relevant for this dish. Since you're

only cooking the lamb medium rare, the shrinkage won't be dramatic.



Mold the stuffing into a log that's as long as the meat is wide.

# The rich, sweet flavor of lamb really shines next to strong seasonings.

#### FINISHING THE DISH IS THE SIMPLE PART

Once you've made the sauce and stuffing, and rolled and tied the loin, most of the work

is done. Refrigerate the roast for 24 hours if you like before you cook it.

The cooking is done in two stages: first, a thorough browning in a hot skillet (I really like the contrast between a well-browned outer crust and pink, juicy meat inside), and a short roasting time in a 425°F oven. With experience, you can tell when the meat is done just by poking it with your finger, but until you've developed that sensitive touch, use an

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instant-read meat thermometer. The lamb should register 130° to 135°F.

Serving is easy. Let the roast rest for at least 10 minutes (it will keep under a tent of foil in a warm spot for up to half an hour), and then cut it into ½- to ¾-inch slices. The medallions look prettier if they're sliced thin, but they tend to hold their shape better if they're a little on the thick side. Snip the string with scissors after you've cut the slices. I like to serve this lamb with couscous that's studded with tiny diced vegetables and parsley, and seasoned with saffron, lemon, olive oil, and cumin.

#### Lamb Loin with Spinach-Merguez Stuffing & Olive-Infused Sauce

The olive brine seasons the sauce sufficiently; no additional salt is needed. *Serves six.* 

FOR THE SAUCE:

2 Tbs. olive oil

Bones and trim from loin or 2 lamb shanks (or both)

2 medium carrots, cut into 1-inch slices

1 onion, unpeeled, chopped coarsely

2 heads garlic, unpeeled, chopped coarse

1 cup dry white wine

1 qt. veal or chicken stock

1 cup canned tomatoes

2 bay leaves, preferably fresh

3 sprigs fresh thyme 1 cup brine from kalamata olives

#### FOR THE STUFFING:

1½ lb. merguez or other spicy lamb sausage
½ lb. fresh spinach, blanched, drained, chopped, and squeezed very dry
¾ cup fresh breadcrumbs
¼ tsp. freshly ground black pepper
Salt, if needed

#### FOR THE LAMB:

1 loin of lamb, boned and trimmed, bones and trim reserved (about 4 lb. total) Freshly ground black pepper 1 Tbs. oil

Prepare the sauce. In a large stockpot, heat the oil. When it's very hot but not smoking, add the lamb bones and trim, shanks (if using), carrots, onion, and garlic. Cook over high heat until all the ingredients are lightly browned, about 15 min. Add the wine and simmer, skimming any fatfrom the surface, until reduced by about two-thirds; don't let it boil. Add the stock, tomatoes, bay leaves, thyme, and olive brine. Reduce over medium-high heat for about 1 hour. You should have about 2½ cups of rich, flavorful sauce. Strain the sauce, pressing out the juices from the vegetables and meat scraps. Let the sauce cool and skim the fat. Taste the sauce and reduce it further if necessary; you should have about 1¼ cups.

Make the stuffing. Sauté the merguez in a dry pan, stirring until it begins to release some of its juices. You may



Lay the loin on your work surface horizontally, and set the log of stuffing on top, at the wider end of the rectangle. Roll the meat around the stuffing.

Tie the loin at opposite ends and along the roll at even intervals.



Individual strings, rather than a continuous tie, make it easier to slice neat medallions at serving time.





Sear the loin for 4 to 5 minutes on each side in a very hot pan with just a little oil. The author likes the contrast between a well-browned outer crust and a pink, juicy inside.



Serving is easy. Let the roast rest for at least ten minutes and then slice it into medallions ½ to ¾ inch wide. Snip the trussing with scissors just before serving the slices.

want to cook a piece thoroughly to taste and decide how much salt the stuffing will need. Pour the sausage and fat drippings into a mixing bowl. Add the spinach, breadcrumbs, pepper, and salt (if needed) and toss. Shape the stuffing into a log about as long as the loin is wide.

Prepare the lamb—Season what will be the inside of the rolled loin with pepper. Stuff and tie the loin as shown on p. 65 and at left. Sprinkle it with pepper.

Heat the oven to 425°F. In a large sauté pan, heat the oil until very hot and then sear the loin until all sides are well browned, 4 to 5 min. on each side, pouring off the rendered fat as you go. Transfer the loin to a roasting pan (if your sauté pan is ovenproof, you leave the loin in that pan) and roast until the lamb registers 130° to 135°F on a meat thermometer, about 10 min.

Let the lamb rest for at least 10 min. Cut into  $\frac{1}{2}$ - to  $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch slices, and spoon the sauce over the medallions.

#### **Couscous Timbale**

The Middle Eastern spices in this couscous make it a fine accompaniment to the lamb. Use six-ounce ramekins if you don't have timbale molds, or simply serve it loose. *Serves six.* 



Cooked couscous is packed into forms that are unmolded just before serving. The couscous timbale is best served at room temperature or slightly warm.

2 cups water
1½ tsp. salt
2 tsp. ground cumin
1 tsp. ground coriander
2 tsp. turmeric
1 large pinch saffron
1 cup couscous
¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil
Juice of ½ lemon
1 cup brunoise: ¼-inch dice

1 cup brunoise: 1/8-inch dice of any combination of carrot, zucchini, onion, leek, and red bell pepper 1/4 cup dried currants, soaked overnight in cold water,

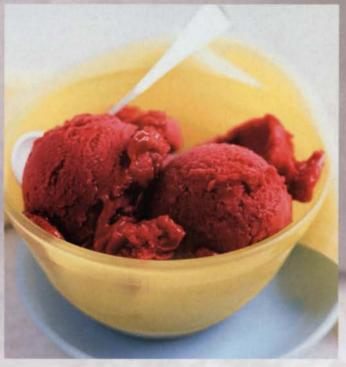
drained, and squeezed out

In a small saucepan, combine the water, salt, cumin, coriander, turmeric, and saffron and heat until hot but not boiling. Remove the pan from the heat. Put the couscous in a medium-sized bowl and add the spiced water a little at a time, alternating with the olive oil and mixing and tossing while adding the liquids. Check occasionally to see if the couscous has softened enough to eat—you'll probably need to use almost all of the spice liquid. The couscous should be tender but not mushy.

Add the lemon juice, brunoise, and currants. Pack the mixture into six oiled timbale molds; save the rest for seconds. Serve at room temperature or slightly warm.

David Waltuck is the chef/owner of Chanterelle in New York City. ◆





# Cool Sorbets, Intensely Flavored

The right proportion of sugar is the secret to silky-smooth sorbets

BY DARREN DEVILLE

t the small restaurant where I'm the pastry chef, I always have a long list of rich desserts on our blackboard menu. But the desserts that often set whole tables to "oohing" are my simple, fruity sorbets. My sorbets grab the spotlight because they're intensely flavored, they combine fruits in unusual ways, and they have a creamy texture that makes it hard to believe they don't contain milk or cream.

One of the things I like most about sorbets is that they're so easy to make. No matter how busy I am, there's always enough time to make a great sorbet. All that's needed is flavorful fruit that's been puréed or juiced and sugar syrup, which is just sugar and water simmered together. Combine the fruit and syrup, freeze it in an ice-cream maker, and you have a no-fail sorbet.

#### THE FRUITS THAT MAKE THE SORBET

When choosing fruit for sorbets, go for what's most fragrant, even if it's past its prime. Flavors are at their most intense when fruits are just between ripe and rotten. Mushy mangos, soft strawberries, and tired raspberries all make excellent sorbets. Don't worry about the texture of the fruit: sorbets are made from purées or fresh juice, so your only concern when choosing fruit is flavor.

Really ripe, fresh fruit produces the most dramatic flavors, but frozen fruit can be very good, too. Because processors pick fruit at the peak of ripeness and then flash-freeze it, frozen fruit is often of high quality. Freezing does destroy some of the fruit's flavor compounds, but I often use frozen berries: the

difference in taste is minimal because of the high sugar content of the sorbet.

Poach, then purée. If fruit is less than ripe, I like to poach it in sugar syrup before I purée it. This develops the fruit's flavor and breaks down its flesh, which makes it easier to purée.

> Some fruits should always be poached. Unless they're overripe, peaches, plums, and pears have more flavor after poaching. Also, always poach pineapple

and kiwi for sorbets. The heat kills an enzyme in the fruit that inhibits freezing.

LAYERS OF FLAVOR

While I love the straightforward flavor of a deepred raspberry sorbet, I think the most interesting sorbets come from combining flavors. I

like to choose one primary

Sorbets need sugar and alcohol. They both act as "thermostats" and determine how icy or slushy the sorbet will be.

flavor that's on the sweet side—say, mango—and combine it with a tart counterpoint, such as lime. The two fruits enhance each other and make a single deep, complex flavor.

Combine fruit and herbs in sorbets. This isn't as strange as it sounds. The combination of orangebasil or lemon-rosemary doesn't result in something that tastes like it should sit next to a pork chop. Instead, the savory herbs subtly enhance the sweetness of the fruit. People sometimes find that extra element difficult to recognize; they love what they're tasting, and they know it's orange or lemon, but they can't quite put a finger on that "something else" that makes the sorbet taste so good.

#### THE MAGIC OF SUGAR SYRUP

The best friend of a great sorbet is plain white sugar. Not only does it have a fairly neutral flavor that enhances the fruit without overwhelming it, but granulated sugar is also the main ingredient in a sorbet's secret weapon: simple syrup.

Simple syrup deserves its name: it's just equal amounts of sugar and water simmered together until the sugar dissolves. Simple syrup gives sorbets a creaminess you can't get with undissolved sugar, and it combines easily with the fruit juices or purées.

The right amount of syrup depends on the flavors you use. Sorbets made with low-sugar fruits like lemons require more sugar syrup than naturally sweet fruits like strawberries.



Fruit for sorbets can be fresh or frozen. Most frozen fruit is of high quality, and since it will be puréed, the texture doesn't matter.

#### SUGAR AND ALCOHOL ACT AS THERMOSTATS

When it comes to frozen desserts, think of sugar as heat. That's because sugar lowers a sorbet's freezing point: the more sugar a sorbet contains, the smaller the ice crystals will be. Smaller crystals mean a smoother sorbet.

Although you can adjust the sweetness of a sorbet to suit your taste, it's important not to attempt a low-sugar or candy-sweet sorbet. Too much sugar means your sorbet will never freeze

beyond slushiness; too little means it will be icy. Artificial sweeteners are not an option; they would give the sorbet the rock-hard texture of having no sugar at all.

Alcohol warms up sorbets. If you want a sorbet that's less sweet but still creamy, a touch of alcohol does the trick. Like sugar, alcohol makes it hard for ice crystals to form in the sorbet, and too much alcohol will make a sorbet stop short of freezing.

Alcohol can also add flavor to sorbet. Try pairing fruit with a similarly flavored alcohol, such as raspberry purée with a raspberry liqueur (Chambord, for example). For alcohol's effect with no additional

flavor, use vodka. Whatever you use, remember that a too-generous handwith the alcohol will make a too-soft sorbet that resembles a cocktail more than a dessert.



Too much sugar means the

sorbet will never freeze

beyond slushiness;

too little means it will be icy.

These sorbets taste like fresh fruit.
Clockwise from top: plum-raspberry; strawberry-grapefruit; and mango-lime.

#### MAKING SORBET, FROM FRUIT TO FREEZING

No matter what flavor sorbet you're making, the steps are always the same.

**Purée or juice the fruit.** This is as easy as it sounds. If you're puréeing raspberries, strain the purée to remove small seeds.

Make the simple syrup. As long as you use one cup of water for every cup of sugar, you can make batches of the syrup in any amount you like. Be sure you simmer the syrup just until the sugar is completely dissolved. Extra syrup will keep in the refrigerator indefinitely.

Combine and flavor the mix. Mix the fruit purée or juice with the syrup, adjust the flavors, and you're ready to go. I like to combine the fruit with warm simple syrup—just-made or reheated—because the heat helps bring out the flavors. The sorbet will freeze more quickly if you chill the mixture before pouring it into the ice-cream maker. After the mixture has cooled to room temperature, chill it in the refrigerator before freezing it.

Adjust sweetness and tartness. Always taste the sorbet mixture before you freeze it. Flavors are muted when frozen, which means the sorbet mixture should be a little too sweet and strong tasting before it's frozen. If it's too potent to drink straight but has a taste you love, you've gotten it right. If you find that the mixture is too sweet, try adding a little lemon juice until you achieve the flavor you want.

Pour the mixture into an ice-cream maker. The ice-cream maker's task is to beat air into the sorbet as it freezes, which gives the sorbet a light, smooth texture. Any ice-cream maker will do; just let the mixture churn and freeze until the sorbet is thick. Just-frozen sorbet will be on the soft side—it won't hold a scoop very well—but it shouldn't be thin or soupy.

The sorbet is ready to eat when it comes out of the ice-cream maker, but the flavor and texture improve if you transfer it to an airtight container and put it in your freezer for a couple of hours.

**Eat and make more.** Sorbet keeps very well for two weeks; after that, the flavors start to fade and the sorbet gets icy. Odds are you'll run out long before that happens.

#### **Raspberry-Chambord Sorbet**

I like the flavor Chambord adds to this deep-ruby sorbet, but you could also substitute vodka or another liqueur. *Yields 3½ cups*.

¼ cup sugar
 ¼ cup water
 3 cups fresh raspberries (or one 12-oz. bag frozen raspberries, thawed) puréed and strained to yield 2 cups purée
 ¼ cup Chambord
 2 Tbs. fresh lemon juice

In a saucepan, combine the sugar and water over high heat. Stir occasionally until the sugar is completely dissolved and the syrup is simmering, about 5 min. Remove from the heat. You should have about ½ cup syrup.

In a mixing bowl, combine the warm syrup with the raspberry purée, Chambord, and lemon juice. Stir well to combine and then let the mixture cool to room temperature. For faster freezing, transfer the cooled mixture to the refrigerator to chill there first.

Freeze the mixture in an ice-cream maker, following the manufacturer's instructions.

#### **Lemon-Rosemary Sorbet**

Both tangy and herbal, this sorbet is a refreshing treat on warm summer evenings. *Yields 3½ cups*.

1½ cups sugar 1½ cups water ½ cup finely chopped fresh rosemary 1½ cups fresh lemon juice 3 Tbs. vodka Savory herbs subtly enhance sweet sorbets such as orange-basil (in the back) and lemon-rosemary (in front). The herbs release their flavors when steeped in warm sugar syrup.





Balance sweet and tart in this strawberrygrapefruit sorbet. To intensify the grapefruit flavor, let the sorbet sit before freezing.

In a saucepan, combine the sugar and water over high heat. Stir occasionally until the sugar is completely dissolved and the syrup is simmering, about 5 min. Remove from the heat. You should have about 2 cups syrup.

Combine the warm syrup with the rosemary, lemon juice, and vodka. Stir well to combine, and then let the mixture cool to room temperature. For faster freezing, transfer the cooled

mixture to the refrigerator to chill there first.

Strain the mixture and then freeze it in an ice-cream maker, following the manufacturer's instructions.

#### **Orange-Basil Sorbet**

Here, basil rounds out the orange flavor, but the uninformed would be hard-pressed to identify the mysterious element as basil. *Yields* 3½ cups.

34 cup sugar 34 cup water 2 cups fresh orange juice 1 cup lightly packed chopped fresh basil 3 Tbs. Grand Marnier or orange-flavored vodka 3 Tbs. freshly grated orange zest

In a saucepan, combine the sugar and water over high heat. Stir occasionally until the sugar is completely dissolved and the syrup is simmering, about 5 min. Remove from the heat. You should have a little more than 1 cup syrup.

Combine ¾ cup of the warm syrup with the orange juice, basil, Grand Marnier, and orange zest; stir well to combine. Set aside for 30 min. to 1 hour, according to taste: the basil flavor strengthens as it sits. For faster freezing, transfer the cooled mixture to the refrigerator to chill there first.

Strain the mixture and then freeze it in an ice-cream maker, following the manufacturer's instructions.

#### Mango-Lime Sorbet

The rich texture of mangoes creates an exceptionally smooth and creamy sorbet. *Yields 6 cups*.

1¾ cups sugar
1¾ cups water
4 medium very ripe mangoes (about 11 oz. each), peeled, pitted, and puréed to yield 2 cups purée
2 Tbs. vodka
½ cup fresh lime juice
2 tsp. freshly grated lime zest

In a saucepan, combine the sugar and water over high heat. Stir occasionally until the sugar is completely dissolved and the syrup is simmering, about 5 min. Remove from the heat. You should have a little more than  $2\frac{1}{2}$  cups syrup.

Combine 2½ cups of the warm syrup with the mango purée, vodka, lime juice, and lime zest. Let the mixture cool to room temperature. For faster freezing, transfer the cooled mixture to the refrigerator to chill there first. Freeze the mixture in an ice-cream maker, following the manufacturer's instructions.

#### **Plum-Raspberry Sorbet**

For this sorbet, the fruit is poached in the syrup to soften the fruit and intensify its flavor before it's puréed. *Yields* 6 cups.

1¾ cups sugar 1¾ cups water 1 cup fresh raspberries (or frozen, thawed) 6 very ripe plums, quartered and pitted 2 Tbs. vodka 1 Tbs. fresh lemon juice

In a saucepan, combine the sugar and water over high heat. Stir occasionally until the sugar is completely dissolved and the syrup is simmering, about 5 min. Remove from the heat. You should have a little more than  $2\frac{1}{2}$  cups syrup.

In a medium saucepan, combine the raspberries and plums with 1 cup of the warm syrup. Poach the fruit over medium-low heat until it's very soft, 5 to 10 min. Allow the fruit and syrup to cool briefly and then purée the mixture in a food processor or blender. Strain the purée through a fine sieve into a medium bowl.

Combine the purée with  $1\frac{1}{2}$  cups of the syrup, the vodka, and the lemon juice. Let the mixture cool to room temperature. For faster freezing, transfer the cooled mixture to the refrigerator to chill there first.

Freeze the mixture in an ice-cream maker, following the manufacturer's instructions.

#### Strawberry-Grapefruit Sorbet

Grapefruit adds a tart edge to this refreshing sorbet. Yields  $6\frac{1}{2}$  cups.

2 large grapefruit
1½ cups sugar
1½ cups water
3 cups very ripe strawberries (or one 12-oz. bag frozen strawberries, thawed), puréed to yield 1¼ cups
3 Tbs. vodka
2 tsp. fresh lemon juice

Remove four strips of zest from one of the grapefruit. Each strip should be about 4 inches long and 1 inch wide; avoid the bitter white pith. Set the strips aside. Juice both the grapefruit; you should have about 2 cups juice. Set the juice aside.

In a medium saucepan, combine the sugar and water over high heat. Stir occasionally until the sugar is completely dissolved and the syrup is simmering, about 5 min. Remove from the heat.

Combine the warm syrup with the zest, grapefruit juice, strawberry purée, vodka, and lemon juice. Set aside for 30 min. to 1 hour, according to taste: the grapefruit flavor strengthens as it sits. For faster freezing, transfer the cooled mixture to the refrigerator to chill there first.

Strain the mixture and then freeze it in an ice-cream maker, following the manufacturer's instructions.

Darren Deville is the pastry chef at The Grape in Dallas. ◆



A dry towel is all you need to clean most mushrooms. Never soak them.

#### Cleaning fresh mushrooms

Almost every supermarket produce section has an array of cultivated, woodland, and dried mushrooms. With all these choices come the question of handling. If you're confused, you're not alone. Even chefs disagree on how to clean mushrooms. Some wash them, some say never let a mushroom near water. Cookware companies sell special baby-soft brushes, making us believe that these flavorful fungi need special handling. And they do, but there's no real mystery to it.

Buy top quality and don't wash until you're ready to cook. Begin by selecting good-quality mushrooms. Regardless of the species, fresh mushrooms should be firm, without soft or soggy spots. They should smell pleasantly earthy, not dank or fishy.

Refrigerate mushrooms, unwashed, in a well-ventilated container or loosely covered with a dry towel and use them quickly. Clean them only

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when you're ready to use them; they'll last longer this way.

Most mushrooms need only a light wipe, never a soak. Common cultivated mushrooms (white buttons. crimini, and shiitakes) usually need little more than a brush with a dry towel and a trim of the earthy stem before they're ready to use. Remove stems that are excessively woody (always cut off shiitake stems). as they'll stay tough even after cooking. If your mushrooms have stubborn dirt, wash them quickly under cool running water and dry them individually. For larger quantities, set a colander in the sink. shower the mushrooms with the spray hose, and dry each individually.

Some mushrooms (especially truly wild varieties) arrive with all sorts of souvenirs of the woods—bits of twigs, earth, pine needles. In this case, you may need to be more aggressive and use the sink's sprayer combined with a soft brush. In all cases, avoid soaking. Because of their spongelike texture, fresh mushrooms absorb a lot of water, if given the chance. This added water translates into diluted flavor and mushy mushrooms.

A touch of lemon juice or vinegar sprinkled on white mushrooms while rinsing will keep them bright white even when cooked. Just be sure to dry them thoroughly after rinsing.

Peel only in extreme cases. Some chefs peel mushrooms in order to present a pristine white cap. Others argue that the outer skin delivers a lot of flavor. I don't believe it's worth the trouble to peel mushrooms unless they're excessively dirty.

#### **Bringing** home the right bacon

Pork lends itself to preserving more than any other meat. A mild flavor, high moisture content, and generous distribution of fat make pork a bit of a chameleon, allowing it to readily alter its character depending on its cure. (Salting and smoking are the most common curing techniques.) While modern curing practices don't actually preserve the meat (it must be

refrigerated), they do alter the flavor and texture of pork in wonderful ways. Europe, Asia, and the Americas all have long traditions of curing pork. Some of the most common cured pork products are profiled here.

**Bacon** is made from sides of pork belly that are brined and then smoked. Because it's only partially cured, bacon is considered uncooked.

The fat streaks in bacon contribute to its appealing flavor and texture, so look for bacon with a healthy ratio of fat to meat. You can find thinsliced packaged bacon in any supermarket. Unsliced bacon (called slab bacon) and thicksliced bacon may be available from the deli and certainly from a specialty butcher.

Medium-thick slices of bacon cut into half-inch pieces, called lardons, give a smoky flavor to sauces, stews, soups, and braises. Lardons are often fried and used as a garnish for salads and soups.

Pancetta is the Italian version of bacon. Made from sides of pork belly, it's curled into a tight roll and wrapped in a casing to hold its cylindrical shape. Pancetta is cured with salt and a lot of pepper, but unlike bacon, it isn't smoked. You can substitute bacon for pancetta, but blanch the bacon first to reduce its smoky flavor.

Bacon and pancetta are usually cooked as the first step when they're used in a soup, stew, or sauce. When the remaining ingredients are then sautéed in

Slab bacon keeps better than sliced bacon, and it can be cut thick or thin as needed.

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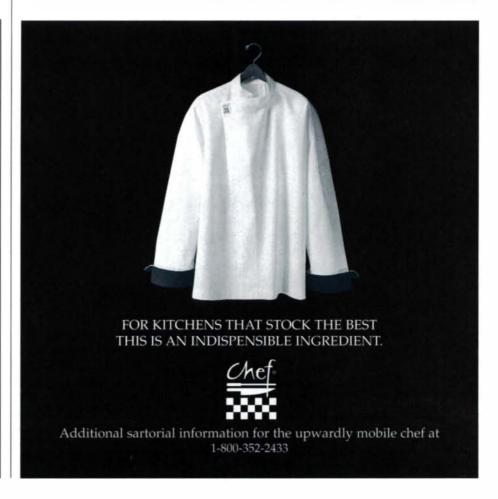
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# BASICS

the rendered fat, the entire dish takes on the wonderful rich, slightly salty flavor of the bacon or pancetta.

Canadian bacon, also called back bacon, is more like ham than bacon. This lean, meaty cut is actually a cured, lightly smoked pork loin. Canadian bacon's neat, cylindrical shape makes it an ideal choice for eggs Benedict and sandwiches. It can be eaten without further cooking, but

With a little knowledge, you can choose just the right form of pork to flavor a particular dish.

it's best sliced thick and fried, grilled, or baked.

Prosciutto is actually a ham, meaning that it's made from fresh pork from the hind legs. To make prosciutto, hams from specially fed hogs are seasoned, salt-cured, and airdried for close to a year. This long aging process leaves the meat firm, dry, and ready to savor with no further cooking.

True prosciutto di Parma (literally "ham from Parma") can only be produced in the region of Parma in Italy and hasn't been available in the United States until recently. While there are several domestic prosciuttos, it's worth seeking out the real thing.

Prosciutto is best eaten as is, sliced thin and paired with melon or figs, on a crusty sandwich, or as a pizza topping. It's also used to season soups, sauces, and stews, but unlike pancetta (with which it's often confused), prosciutto should not be cooked because it will

Pancetta has a flavor that's more delicate than that of Ameri-Ham hocks have plenty can bacon. of meat which can be pulled off after slow cooking. Salt pork is sold in Canadian bacon is a chunks. The best cured, boneless pork loin. have a streak of lean. Prosciutto should be sliced very thin and eaten raw or only lightly cooked. Fat back is used to keep lean meats moist while they cook.

toughen. Stir it into soups and stews at the last minute.

Ham hocks give flavor and texture to slow-cooked stews and bean soups. Hocks are cut from the lower legs and contain bone, lean meat, rind, and fat. They're most often cooked whole in a soup or stew and removed before serving. The little bit of tender, flavorful meat can then be pulled or cut from the hock and added back into the dish.

Ham hocks are often salted and heavily smoked; these are best in dishes with fresh vegetables and beans. Fresh ham hocks pair well with cured vegetables, such as sauerkraut. Salt pork is made from the fatty part of the belly, knuckle, and shoulder of the pig and is heavily salted but not smoked. Recipes often call for salt pork to be soaked or blanched to make it less salty before it's used to add savory fat to dishes such as clam chowder and collard greens.

Fat back is neither smoked nor cured, but it deserves mention here because it's often confused with salt pork. Fat back is the pure, unprocessed fat taken from the pig's back or belly; it's sold in slabs or in thin sheets. The slabs are usually rendered to make

cooking fat (lard) or cut into strips for threading into lean cuts of meat (a technique known as larding). The sheets are used to wrap meats to keep them moist when roasted (a technique called barding).

Cracklings, small pieces of salt pork or fat back that are fried until crispy, are added to cornbread or used as a crunchy garnish.

—Molly Stevens, a Fine Cooking contributing editor, is a chef/instructor at the New England Culinary Institute in Essex, Vermont. ◆

# Fine Cooking Back Issues! Mint condition back issues cover everything from making stuffed pasta to shopping for kitchenware and more.



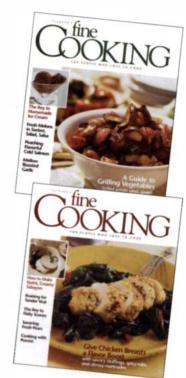
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Mustard, from Subtle to Scorching

Where I live in California, yellow mustard fields are the first sign of spring. Before the orchards bloom, before the vineyards leaf out, the mustard plants flower, luminous in the gray light of rainy skies. This fast-growing annual plant thrives in the long daylight hours of summer throughout the northern hemisphere.

In markets, you'll find mustard in three forms—whole seed, powder, and prepared paste. Each appears to be quite different from the other, though they all originate from the stick-shaped seed pods of the glowing yellow mustard plant. In any guise, mustard is marvelously versatile, and once you grasp the chemistry of the little mustard seed, you'll find it to

Brown mustard seed can be pale to dark brown. Some varieties look like white seed, but if you feel it in your sinuses, it's brown mustard seed.

be one of the simplest, handiest seasonings around.

# SMALLER, DARKER SEEDS MEAN MORE INTENSE FLAVOR

All mustard begins as seed, and the darker and smaller the seed, the hotter and more flavorful it is. Add mustard seed to chutneys or curries. Throw some into a marinade for a roast; the seeds will add aroma and texture. Stored in a tightly closed container, mustard seed will keep up to a year.

Black mustard (Brassica nigra) is the most potent. Difficult to harvest, it's no longer commercially grown, as the delicate seed pods explode and scatter when ripe. Black mustard is found in the Mideast and in Asia. An invasive plant that can grow up to 12 feet high, it produces the smallest, darkest, most intensely flavored seeds.

**Brown mustard** (*B. juncea*) is native to the Himalayas and

has a slightly larger seed that's grown throughout the world and widely used commercially. Subspecies range in color from pale to dark brown; all are highly aromatic and "tasted" at the back of the nose, in the sinuses. Today, what's sold as black seed is actually oriental brown mustard, a hotter subspecies developed to replace the black.

White mustard (*B. alba*) has pale yellow seeds and is sometimes called yellow mustard. Slightly larger than brown seed, white mustard seed has little aroma, but it's spicy hot and is "tasted" on the tip of the tongue. Most of

today's commercial mustards are blended from a combination

of brown and white seeds.

All varieties of the mustard plant flower to a glowing yellow, including

this white mustard.

BRASSICA ALBA

Mustard seed is inert and flavorless until it's crushed and the intense flavor of its essential oils is released by a liquid. Acid slightly retards this process, preserving the flavor and taming it somewhat. This is why many prepared mustards are made with acidic liquids, such as vinegar, wine, or ale. Chinese and Japanese mustards are made with water; this, along with a fiery variety of seed, accounts for their intensity.

A darker, stronger variety of brown seed has been cultivated to replace black mustard seed, which is difficult to harvest. This dark-brown strain delivers some of the potent kick of true black mustard seed.



You'll find mustard seed in grocery stores, health-food stores, and Asian markets. The seed is seldom labeled white or brown, and despite their names, there isn't a dramatic color difference between the two. White seed is larger than brown, and if you taste it on the tip of your tongue, you'll know it's white. If you taste it in your sinuses, it's probably brown seed.

# **DRY MUSTARD'S POWER RELIES ON COLD LIQUID**

Dry mustard (also called mustard powder or mustard flour) is crushed and milled mustard seed. Coleman's dry mustard from England is made from a mixture of brown and white seeds, and it sets the standard for dry mustards. As with any spice, the intensity of dry mustard fades a few months after it's ground.

Dry mustard is a great emulsifier for vinaigrettes and an ideal thickener for cold sauces. The powder's flavorintensifying powers don't stop at savory dishes: cookie, cake, and even custard recipes may call for dry mustard to amplify their flavor.

When you mix dry mustard with liquid, the result is prepared mustard. Add the

White mustard seed is slightly larger than brown and delivers a bite you feel at the tip of your tongue.

powder only to cold liquids, as its volatile oils are heat sensitive: hot liquid can turn dry mustard bitter and off tasting, and long exposure to heat can kill the flavor completely. (Once dry mustard is mixed into a paste, higher temperatures pose no problem.)

the chiefing redient in American ballpark mustard, it's prohibited in Dijon mustard. Tewkesbury, England, is famous for its horseradishflavored mustard. German mustard may have turmeric in it, and French a hint of tarragon; both of these are often

Mustard's flavoring power goes far beyond savories—try mustard powder in cookie dough or spice cake batter.

# PREPARED MUSTARD IS A SIMPLE PASTE

Probably because it's so easy to make, prepared mustard is a global favorite, from the American ballpark variety, to scorching Asian, to the venerable Dijon mustard, the preparation of which is controlled by French law. Prepared mustard smoothes sauces and mayonnaise, emulsifies vinaigrettes (and saves broken ones), and adds zip to dips, beans, stews, and marinades. In its prepared state, mustard can be added to hot or cold mixtures. Add it near the end of the cooking time to give food a more pronounced mustard flavor.

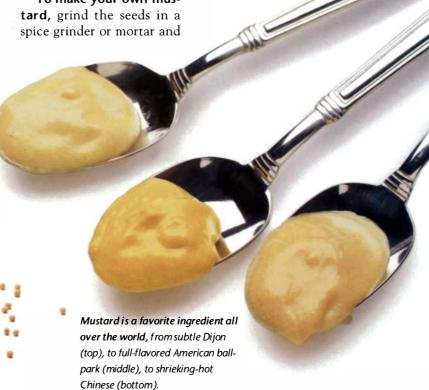
The flavor of prepared mustard varies widely, depending on the origin of the recipe. While white seed is

based on coarse-ground mustard seed, resulting in a grainy mustard. Japanese mustard. the hottest of all, traditionally favored fiery black seed mixed with wasabi (the pungent Japanese horseradish), though most mustard in Japan is made with brown seed. Chinese mustard may contain chile or sesame.

To make your own mustard, grind the seeds in a spice grinder or mortar and pestle, or start with mustard powder, add one part cold water to three parts mustard powder and mix into a paste; then add five to eight parts acid. Proportions vary, and the formula's simplicity invites experimentation—try vinegar, lime juice, white wine, or dark beer. Garden herbs or something sweet like honey can balance the pungency and acid.

Homemade mustards benefit from a week or two of curing in the refrigerator (where all mustards should be kept after opening). The mustard recipes in Michele Anna Jordan's The Good Cook's Book of Mustard are some of the best around.

Sally Small grows mustard in her orchards at the Pettigrew Fruit Company in Walnut Grove, California.



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# Taking the Fear Out of Frying

Perfectly fried food is hard to resist. French fries, crab fritters, and shrimp tempura, all have a crisp, golden crust that surrounds a tender center. Done right, fried food is neither heavy nor greasy, but doing it right takes a little knowledge and practice. So many variables are involved in frying that some people swear it's as much art as it is science. What follows is some of the science.

# WATER PLAYS A KEY ROLE IN FRYING

All foods contain water, and for most it's a major component. The basic principle of frying involves water movement. When a food, whether a sliced potato or a chicken leg, is submerged in hot fat, the high heat boils the water nearest the food's surface, and the steam that results rushes out. This continues as water in the center of the food moves toward the surface.

This outward push of steam accomplishes two things: it cools the surface of the food, preventing the outside from burning; and it keeps the oil from seeping into the food. As the moisture inside is reduced, the rush of steam slows. This allows the surface of the food to heat and brown and lets only a little oil seep into the channels created by the escaping steam to cook the inside of the food. Food left in the hot oil after all its water has steamed off will absorb excess

fat, which is in part responsible for fried food's bad nutritional reputation.

# FRY FAST BUT THOROUGHLY

Cooking time and temperature are important when frying. Throughout frying, the fat should be hot enough to keep the water in the food boiling and producing steam, but not so hot that it chars the outside before the inside cooks.

The average temperature for successful frying is about 375°F, but that can vary depending on the food and the results you're after.

Cooking time depends on the temperature of the fat and food, as well as the amount of food, its size, shape, and moisture content. For best results, consider these variables:

Cook high-moisture food longer at lower temperatures. If food with a high water content (like french fries made with a highmoisture new potato) is fried at too high a temperature, a crust will form too quickly. This traps the steam inside, which makes the food turn limp as it cools. On the other hand, frying food with a low water content (like a starchy potato) for too long will cause the water to steam off and be replaced by oil, making for greasy, sunken fried food.

Adding food to hot oil reduces the oil's temperature. Putting a large amount of cold food into hot oil will cause the temperature of the



**A rush of steam from frying food causes the fat to bubble** and keeps the food from charring.

oil to decrease dramatically, resulting in a long cooking time and greasy food. Adding a small batch of cold food to a large amount of hot oil will make the temperature drop only slightly and briefly.

Equal size pieces of food cook evenly. Keep the pieces of food about the same size so

that they cook in the same amount of time.

High temperatures (375° to 390°) are ideal for small, thin pieces of food. Larger pieces fried at these high temperatures run the risk of burning on the outside before the inside is cooked; they may do better at 350° to 365°.

Fry it twice for evenly cooked food with a crisp crust. Because frying at a low temperature may not provide the desired brown crust, some foods are best fried twice. Fry the food first at a low temperature, like 350°, to give it a head start on thorough cooking. Then remove the food from the oil, increase the temperature of the

Nevertheless, fresh or minimally used fats produce the best fried foods. As the fat deteriorates, its surface tension lessens, making it soak into foods much faster. At the least, this gives you soggy, greasy food. Worse, deteriorating fat can taste rancid and can even become toxic. And, because even a single use of a fat at a high temperature can

# Done right, fried food is neither heavy nor greasy, but delicate, crisp, and full of flavor.

oil to 390°, and fry the food again to finish the cooking and crisp the surface.

# **CHOOSE THE RIGHT FAT**

Fats suitable for frying should have a high smoking point, such as peanut, corn, canola, or safflower oil. Once a fat begins to smoke, it gives off an acrid odor, and foods fried in it can have an unpleasant flavor. Extra-virgin olive oil, for example, isn't good for frying because it breaks down before it reaches the necessary high temperatures.

Consider flavor, too. A fat's flavor may not be noticeable in highly seasoned fried foods, but it is in delicate foods, so choose the fat accordingly.

Use fresh fat. Many chefs swear that foods brown best when fried in oil that has been used at least once. And they're right: each time a fat is used for frying, it picks up proteins and sugars, which, as they caramelize, contribute to the rich golden crust of the fried food.

lower its flash point (the temperature at which it will combust), used oil has the potential to burst into flame at a dangerously low temperature.

# **BREADINGS AND BATTERS**

Many fried foods include a breading or batter. Here are a few things to consider when using them.

A fine-crumb breading absorbs less fat, but a coarse one will be crisper.

Sugar speeds browning. This can be good or bad, de-



**The more sugarin a batter, the darker the fried food.** The fritters on the left, made with a sugarless batter, cook up lighter. The batter for the fritters on the right used corn syrup, which caramelizes, making the fritters darker.

pending on what you're after. Sugar in an onion-ring batter, for example, will make the rings brown before the onion cooks.

The more fat in a batter, the more fat it will absorb. For a light, dry, batter, egg whites are an ideal ingredient.

Shirley O. Corriher, of Atlanta, teaches food science and cooking classes across the country. She is a contributing editor for Fine Cooking.

TIPS FOR FRYING	
What to do	Why
Adjust the temperature to the size of the food.	Small thin pieces fry quickly at high temperatures, while large, thick pieces need a lower temperature to ensure they'll be cooked through.
Keep the pieces of food uniform in size.	To ensure all food will be done at the same time.
Add food to the fryer in batches.	Adding cold food to hot oil reduces the oil's temperature. Maintaining proper frying temperature limits grease absorption.
For extra-crisp fried food, pre-fry it at a lower temperature.	If the inside is cooked, the food can be fried again quickly and at a high temperature, resulting in a brown, crisp crust.
Keep the surface area of the food dry.	Evaporating water lowers the fat's temperature, deteriorates the fat, and causes it to splatter.
Use a fat with a high smoking point.	To fry food safely and with no off flavors.
Be sure the frying fat is fresh.	Deteriorated fats can have an off-taste, can soak into foods faster, and can burst into flames at lower temperatures.

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The Art of Preserving

grew up in a home where preserving food was a satisfying summer ritual. One of my aunts specialized in breadand-butter pickles, another made the bright, tangy greentomato relish known as piccalilli. Mom's specialty was strawberry jam.

I still spend late-summer weekends putting up what I can of the harvest. Since my family is no longer nearby, I keep my favorite books close at hand. I cherish one for its step-by-step guidance, another for its comprehensive overview of preserving methods. A third is thoughtfully designed for that side of me that thinks I'm too busy to stop and make pickles, and a fourth I keep on hand for the sheer pleasure of its prose.

Putting Food By, by Janet Greene, Ruth Hertzberg, and Beatrice Vaughan, provides more information than most weekend jam makers need, but that's why I love it. There's nothing poetic here, just practical wisdom derived from years of preserving foods in a Vermont farmhouse kitchen. Every year, I find myself turning to these pages for the classic recipes I love, such as beet relish, dilly beans, and apple butter. The revised fourth edition of this 1973 guide includes advice for modern techniques (microwaving, for example) and recipes that appeal to contemporary tastes for less sugar and



A comprehensive guide to preserving, with directions for threshing wheat and making cheese.

salt, yet the book's attitude and appearance remain decidedly old-fashioned. I can hear my grandmother's voice in such common-sense advice as "Even with root cellaring and drying, you'll want some apples put by as sauce, dessert slices, or pie timber."

What Putting Food By lacks in glitz, it repays in clear stepby-step explanations. While the authors' energy for preserving by every possible method might overwhelm some would-be home canners, careful readers will gain a solid understanding of just what happens to food when it's preserved.

Fruits and vegetables get most of the authors' attention, but there are a few brief chapters on preserving meats and seafood, as well as thorough descriptions of curing, drying, smoking, and root cellaring.

The range of the recipes is impressive. Nowhere else have I found instructions for freezing eels beside instructions for making strawberry jam.

**Stocking Up,** by Carol Huping, is billed as the "classic preserving guide." I grew up using my mother's first edi-

Detailed directions and homespun wisdom from a Vermont farmhouse kitchen.

tion, where I was introduced to organic home gardening. The most recent edition, published in 1986, holds true to the book's original premise: "If you grow your own food, you've got it made over those who must rely on the grocery store or supermarket for their daily sustenance." Although the book is written for those who would plant, harvest, and preserve all that they eat, there is plenty of information here for those of us who "rely on the grocery store."

More than half of this thick tome is devoted to vegetables and fruits, starting with alphabetical lists of good varieties to grow and where to buy seeds. Subsequent chapters cover harvesting, canning, freezing, drying, and root cellaring. The text includes directions for building food dryers and root cellars.

This self-sufficient approach continues through every major food group. The dairy chapter has recipes for homemade cheeses, from "instant" mozzarella to Cheddar, as well as vogurt, butter, and ice cream. A chapter on nuts and grains instructs readers on harvesting, hulling or threshing, and processing the grains or nuts into flours or nut butters. Even though I don't thresh my own grain or maintain a herd of milking goats, I enjoy Huping's comprehensive explanations.

(Continued on p. 82)



# REVIEWS

I liked Jeanne Lesem's Preserving Today from the moment I saw it. Those intimidated by making their own preserves will welcome this helpful guide, which is geared to cooks with busy schedules who enjoy fresh new flavors.

The first chapter, "Getting Started," provides a straightforward approach to preserving. No special equipment is required, and lowacid foods that need careful treatment or pose safety risks are avoided altogether.

The 168 recipes encompass the familiar (Strawberry-Rhubarb Jam) as well as the exotic (Cactus Pear Marmalade). Tropical and ethnic foods, such as mango, guava,

The voices and the sensibilities of the two authors make for delightful reading that goes far beyond what we need to know to make Damson Plum lam. Fisher's notes range from the simple "Who is EANNE LESEM Hugh?" scribbled next to a recipe for Hugh's Mustard Pickle, to the more lyrical flights we associate with this passionate writer and the fat bubbles in the

Inventive, forthright recipes for

cooks who think they have no time for preserving.

While Fine Preserving may be less practical than other books, I cherish it for the sheer pleasure of its prose.

and feijoa, add interest to the collection. Lesem's "Market Guide" helps readers identify freshness and quality in less familiar produce. A chapter on sweet and savory sauces includes enticing recipes for several pestos, duck sauce, and a variety of dessert sauces.

The recipes are given for small quantities and keep an eye on the amounts of salt and sugar. Unpretentious and modern throughout, the book includes a chapter on microwave do's and don'ts.

Fine Preserving was written in 1967 by Catherine Plagemann, a homemaker from upstate New York. She spent years collecting recipes from friends and neighbors and testing them in her kitchen. In 1986, Aris Books

discovered M. F. K. Fisher's copy of Fine Preserving, in which she had scribbled her thoughts alongside many of the recipes. The resulting edition includes Fisher's notes in the margins of Plagemann's original text. While this book may be less practical than some, it's one of the most cherished editions in my cooking library. Although the publishers have allowed this book to go out of print, it's well worth searching the shelves of your favorite used book store to locate this treasure.



cook. "There is prob-

ably no better smell

than the forthright

cloud that fills a

room, a memory, as

M. F. K. Fisher annotated this chatty recipe collection by a New York homemaker.

jam pot rise darker from the bottom. Stir! Stir fast!"

The book's thirty chapters are arranged alphabetically by ingredient. Each recipe begins with an anecdote expressing Plagemann's relationship with the recipe or the source. There are some very good and unusual recipes here—Pickled Grapes, Banana Jam, chermoula (a

Moroccan spiced pepper relish that was Fisher's favorite)—all for high-acid foods that require little or no special processing. Sweet and savory preparations are printed side by side, and the yields are generally quite small (two to five pints).

Some of the food-handling advice may cause the cautious cook to raise an eyebrow ("preserving jars and glasses need not be sterilized"), and the instructions for paraffin sealing are too vague to guarantee success for novice jam makers. The brief section on equipment is a bit outdated. Still, this unique guide is (to quote Fisher) "...fun to read and to use. It has given me

> many years of pleasure. Thank you, Mrs. Plagemann." And, I'll add, thank you, Mrs. Fisher.

# **PUBLISHING INFORMATION**

Putting Food By, by Janet Greene, Ruth Hertzberg, and Beatrice Vaughan. The Stephen Greene Press, 1988. \$12.95, softcover; 420 pp. ISBN 0-452-26899-0.

Stocking Up, by Carol Huping. The Rodale Food Center. Simon & Schuster, 1986. \$17.95, softcover; 627 pp. ISBN 0-671-69395-6.

Preserving Today, by Jeanne Lesem. Alfred A. Knopf, 1992. \$23, hardcover; 264 pp. ISBN 0-394-58653-0.

Fine Preserving, M. F. K. Fisher's Annotated Edition of Catherine Plagemann's Cookbook. Aris Books, 1986. \$9.95, softcover; 132 pp. ISBN 0-943186-31-5.

Molly Stevens makes jams and jellies at her home in Vermont. A chef/instructor at the New England Culinary Institute, she is a contributing editor for Fine Cooking. •

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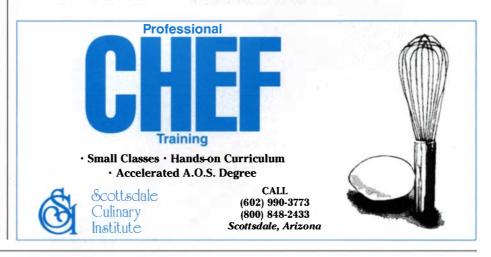
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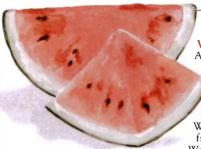
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### **ALABAMA**

22nd Annual Sorghum Sopping Days---September 15–16, Waldo. See sorghum being made the old-fashioned way and enjoy hot biscuits and sausage with sorghum for sopping. Call Wayne Collier at 205/362-8493.



ARKANSAS

20th Annual Hope Watermelon Festival— August 15–18, Fair Park,

Hope. Highlights include melon judging and auction, watermelon-eating contest, seed-spitting contest, Watermelon Olympics, fish fry, cake walk, and a Watermelon Festival parade

with a queen presiding. For information, call 501/777-3640.

### **CALIFORNIA**

12th Annual Blackberry Festival—August 10, Anderson Marsh State Historic Park on Clear Lake, Lower Lake. Call 800/525-3743.

Mendocino Bounty—August 17, Fetzer Food & Wine Center at Valley Oaks, Hopland. Sample food and wine from more than 100 county producers. Call 707/462-3306.

A La Carte, A La Park—August 31, September 1–2, Sharon Meadow, Golden Gate Park, San Francisco. Festival of food, music, and wine, with 50 of the city's best restaurants and chefs, 20 Sonoma County wines, and entertainment. Call 415/383-9378.

American Harvest Workshop: Celebrate America's Table----September 7, Cakebread Cellars, Rutherford. Educational seminars, cooking demonstrations, and a farmers'-market-style food and wine tasting. A multi-course dinner will be paired with an array of Cakebread Cellars wines. Call Karen Cakebread, 707/963-5221.

**37th Annual Artichoke Festival**—September 28–29, Castroville. Call 408/633-2465.

### CONNECTICUT

A Taste of History from Mystic Seaport—August 1–4, Mystic. Demonstrations of 19th century cooking in a Victorian home, a ship's galley, and a wayside tavern, plus tastings and period meals for sale on the village green. Call 203/572-5315.

5th Annual Hot Foods/Cool Wines—September 8, McLaughlin Vineyard, Sandy Hook. Outdoor grilling dinner party featuring wine and beer of the region plus well-known regional chefs George Germon and Johanne Killeen (AI Forno), Don Hysko (Peoples Woods), and Michel Nischan (TriBeCa Grill). Sponsored by the Connecticut chapter of the American Institute of Wine & Food. For information and tickets, call 203/967-6238.

### **HAWAII**

Maui Chefs Present Bistro Boulevard—September 13, Lahaina Center, Maui. Bistro fare created by a dozen of Maui's top chefs. Call 808/667-9193. Taste of Lahaina—September 14–15, Lahaina Center, Maui. Hawaii's largest culinary festival, with chefs from over 40 of Maui's best restaurants and food service companies. Call 808/667-9194.

## **ILLINOIS**

Best of the Midwest Market at Ravinia----September 8, Ravinia Festival Grounds, Highland Park. Food and beverages from 12 Midwestern states. Call 312-RAVINIA.

### INDIANA

Sorghum & Cider Making Days— September 14–15, Billie Creek Village, Rockville. Old-fashioned sorghum making using a horse-powered cane press, and cider-pressing on an 1874 apple press using heirloom apple varieties. Call 317/569-3430.

Persimmon Festival—September 21–28, Main Street, Mitchell. Persimmon pudding cooking contest, persimmon novelty desserts contest, and more. Call 800/580-1985.

### KENTUCKY

27th Annual Marion County Ham Days—September 28–29, Main Street, Lebanon. Call 502/692-2661.

### OUISIANA

Tabasco Community Cookbook Awards competition—deadline for entries: September 30, 1996. Cookbooks compiled by local nonprofit organizations in 1995 or 1996 are eligible to enter the contest, which recognizes outstanding books published for fundraising purposes. Winners receive cash contributions for designated charities. For an entry form, send a SASE to Tabasco Community Cookbook Awards, c/o Hunter & Associates, 41 Madison Ave., New York, NY 10010-2202.

### MAINE

Maine Lobster Festival—August 1--4, Harbor Park, Rockland. Call 800/LOB-CLAW or 207/596-0376.

Winter Harbor Lobster Festival—August 10, Winter Harbor, Schoodic Peninsula. Call 800-231-3008.

### **MARYLAND**

**49th Annual National Hard Crab** Derby—August 30–31, September 1, Crisfield. Crab races, and crab-picking and crab-cooking contests. Call 800/782-3913.

# NEBRASKA

28th Annual Applejack Celebration—September 21–22, Nebraska City. Apple harvest festival includes apple peeling, apple baking, apple-seed spitting contests, and features fresh cider and caramel apples, plus other apple cookery. Call 800/514-9113.

### **NEW MEXICO**

Santa Fe Wine & Chile Fiesta—September 28, Santa Fe. Call 505/982-8686.

### NEW YORK

American Cheese Society Conference—August 1-3, Culinary Institute of America, Hyde Park. Educational workshops, panel discussions, cheese competition, Chefs Challenge (CIA chefs create original recipes with specialty cheeses), and festival of cheeses: a tasting of ACS members' finest products. Call Ruth Flore, 800/884-6287. Cooking classes—Peter Kump's School of Culinary Arts, New York City. August 5-9: Techniques of Pastry & Baking I & II; Techniques of Cake Decorating I. August 12-16: Techniques of Spa Cuisine. August 19-23: Young Teens Cooking Camp. Call 212/410-4601.

### **PENNSYLVANIA**

National Mushroom Festival----September 13–15, Kennett Square. Dinner dance, mushroom farm tours, mushroom cook-off competition, mushroom-picking demonstrations and mushroom dishes. Call 800/932-6369

105th Annual McClure Bean Soup Celebration—September 10–14, McClure. Call 800/338-7389.

### **RHODE ISLAND**

Taste of Rhode Island—September 28–29, Newport Yachting Center, Newport. Call Lynda, 401/846-1600, 2200

## SOUTH DAKOTA

Corn Palace Festival—September 13–22, Mitchell. Extraordinary murals on the exhibition house walls using naturally pigmented corn; agricultural displays, food booths, concerts, and a carnival. Call 800/257-CORN.

### TEYA

Austin Chronicle Hot Sauce Festival—August 25, Central Park, Austin. Contest, tastings of over 320 salsas and pepper sauces. Competition open to the public. Call Elizabeth, 512/454-5766

### VERMONT

Intervale Food Festival: Celebrating the Garden—September 14, Burlington. Organic fresh food extravaganza featuring cooking demonstrations by chefs from New England Culinary Institute; gardening demonstrations, and a showcase of new European vegetable varieties. Call 802-660-3505.

## VIRGINIA

Fish Fry—August 17, Wachapreague. Call Rosalie Hart at 804/442-3933.

### WASHINGTON

Indian-Style Salmon Bake—August 11, Sequim. Salmon are caught fresh the day before and slow cooked on cedar stakes around beds of charcoal. Call Dan Edwards at 360/683-4015.

Send event announcements

to Calendar, Fine Cooking,

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CT 06470-5506. Include

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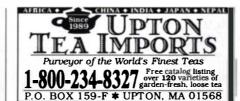
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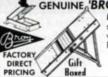
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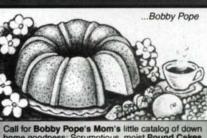
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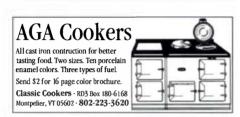
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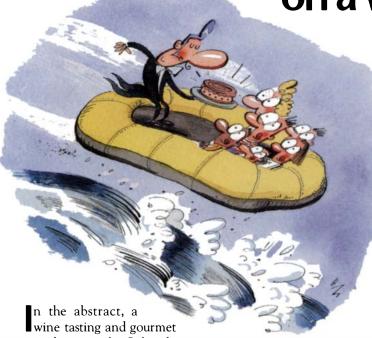
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Recipe (analysis per serving)	Page		ories	Protein	Carb		Fats			Chol	Sodium	Fiber	Notes
		total	fat	(g)	(g)	total	sat	mono		(mg)	(mg)	(g)	
Chiles Frios	34	210	76%	3	13	18	3	10	3	0	150	4	
Grilled Chicken Salpicón	34	430	61%	29	14	29	4	19	3	75	280	3	
Grilled Pico de Gallo	35	50	41%	1	8	2.5	0.5	1.5	0.5	0	65	2	per ¼ cup
Grilled Pineapple with Butter-Rum Sauce	35	310	37%	1	41	13	7	4	1	30	15	1	
Roasted Vegetable & Potato Salad	39	210	43%	5	27	10	3	6	1	10	230	4	per ½ cup
Tiny Potatoes with Bacon & Pecans	39	210	60%	3	19	14	2	8	4	5	360	2	per ½ cup
Potato Salad with Seafood & Sweet Corr	1 40	170	55%	8	11	10	2	3	5	55	410	1	per ½ cup
Zucchini-Tomato Fans	44	130	57%	3	12	8	1	6	1	0	280	3	
Curried Zucchini Soup	44	200	51%	4	24	11	2	8	- 1	0	570	5	per cup
Zucchini "Noodles"	45	40	0%	3	8	0	0	0	0	0	540	3	
Mint & Basil Pesto	45	45	82%	1	1	4	1	2.5	0.5	0	75	0	per Tbs.
Batter-Fried Zucchini & Their Blossoms	45	310	49%	5	33	17	3	8	4	40	220	2	per 1/8 recipe
Rosemary Flatbread	47	260	40%	5	33	11	2	8	1	0	430	1	per 1/20 recipe
Peaches with Dried-Cherry Shortcake	50	740	59%	8	73	49	30	14	2	200	520	4	
Peach Tart	51	540	36%	7	82	22	13	7	1	160	280	4	per 1/8 recipe
Baked Stuffed Peaches	51	250	34%	4	33	9	3	5	1	10	15	6	
Ketchup from "Home"	53	10	0%	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	65	0	per Tbs.
Classic Chicken Bastila	57	660	54%	37	40	39	14	15	7	240	730	3	
Lamb Loin & Spinach-Merguez Stuffing	65	730	62%	59	7	51	18	22	7	205	2530	1	
Couscous Timbale	66	240	39%	5	31	10	1	8	1	0	540	3	
Raspberry-Chambord Sorbet	70	90	0%	1	20	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	per ½ cup
Lemon-Rosemary Sorbet	70	210	0%	0	48	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	per ½ cup
Orange-Basil Sorbet	71	120	0%	1	27	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	per ½ cup
Mango-Lime Sorbet	71	190	0%	1	48	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	per ½ cup
Plum-Raspberry Sorbet	71	150	0%	1	37	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	per ½ cup
Strawberry-Grapefruit Sorbet	71	130	0%	0	29	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	per ½ cup

The nutritional analyses have been calculated by a registered dietitian at The FoodConsulting Company of San Diego, California. When a recipe gives a choice of ingredients, the first choice is the one used in

the calculations. Optional ingredients and those listed without a specific quantity are not included. When a range of ingredient amounts or servings is given, the smaller amount or portion is used.





In the abstract, a wine tasting and gourmet expedition on the Colorado River seemed preposterous. But because I announced the concept *during* a wine tasting, and the suggestion provoked slightly intoxicated enthusiastic nodding, it made a lot of sense. So I gathered equipment and led the hardiest of the wine tasters into the Utah desert where the Colorado River flows.

I'd been guiding and cooking on rivers for ten years, and had come to know that dessert is the most important course. If all else failed, shockingly beautiful desserts would pull us through this culinary journey. River desserts are complicated, requiring precise timing, odd ingredients, a lot of song and dance, and far too much effort from me while wine tasters watch from afar.

The first night, I prepared a flaming banana-and-ice-cream catastrophe. I poured 181-proof ruminto a pan with

brown sugar and jostled it over my flame-throwing, high-Btu propane stove. Rum of such a proof has the volatility of gasoline. There was soon an explosion. I was suddenly clutching a column of flame.

My first instinct was to run. I threw the pan and screamed. The entire flaming mass arced folding lounge chairs, set down their wine glasses to applaud.

The next night, I made a chocolate cake in a Dutch oven and smothered it with a fresh raspberry sauce. As I unveiled the creation, a rain cloud swung over us. I began to cover the cake, saying that dessert would wait until the storm was over.

A woman objected. "I think that it will not rain. We should eat the cake now." "Have patience," I said. She wasn't looking at me: she was fixated by the cake. "Please. We should eat it now." I scowled at her. "The dessert will wait. The storm is coming." She was nearly in tears. staring at the cake, "But can't we just have a bite?" Drops were falling. "No. Find shelter. Stay dry." I inverted a stockpot over the cake. As I stayed in the open, tending to the kitchen while the rain percussively nailed the rocks around me, the wine tasters huddled I did have a lot of cream cheese. Time for cheesecake.

River cheesecake is by far the simplest dessert I could make. Unlike true cheesecake, river cheesecake isn't baked. It's composed solely of cream cheese, milk, and Jell-O Instant Cheesecake mix. I save it for the end of the trip, when people enter a state of numbed ecstasy over anything I whip up. I scooped the embarrassingly simple mixture of cream cheese and sugar into a graham-cracker crust, dotted it with chocolate chips, and handed it to them, saying "Okay, here's the cheesecake."

At first they wouldn't eat it. They demanded that it be displayed, that photos be taken. They paraded it amongst themselves. After a week of intense, complicated desserts, I was taken aback by their interest in this sadly elementary concoction. Surely, when they tasted it, they would say that the pineapple upside-down cake was better. But as they each savored their bites, they shuddered and grinned.

"The best."

"Yes, by far."

"This tops them all."

"But," I mumbled quietly, "the flaming bananas with ice cream and shortbread cookies? The apple cobbler?"

"Oh, no. This is it. You've outdone yourself."

I sulked and pulled my supply list out of the gear. Next time, I wrote, bring more cream cheese.

—Craig Leland Childs, Ouray, Colorado ◆

# The first night, I prepared a flaming banana-and-ice-cream catastrophe.

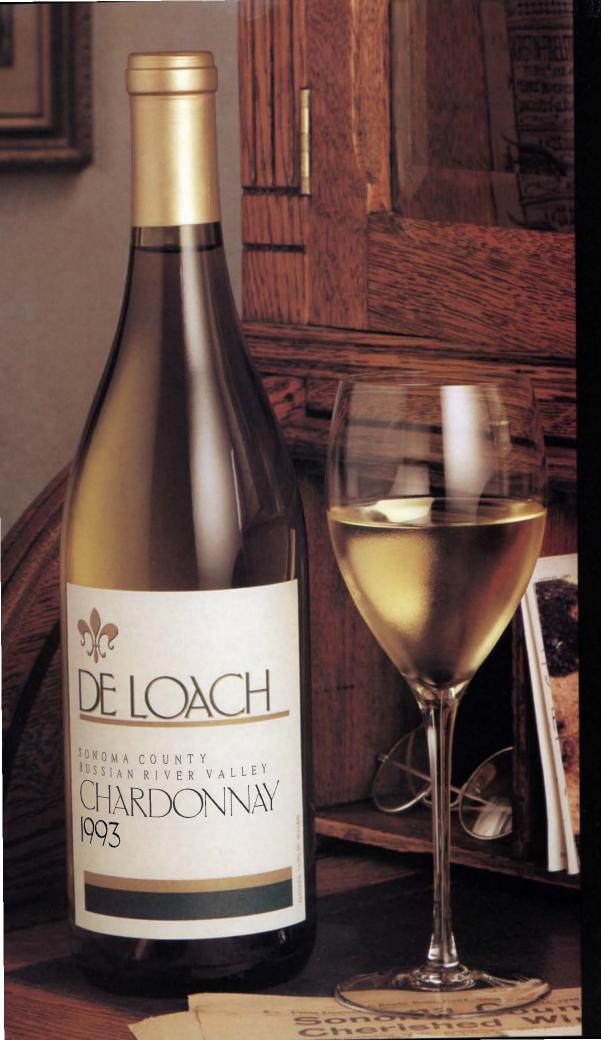
through the air and landed square on a can of lighter fluid, sending sheets of fire across the ground. My next instinct was to stop the fire quickly. I jumped on it with my open sandals. I stomped and leapt, pounding out the fire as each tiny hair on the top of my feet sizzled and vanished in acrid smoke. When the fire was out, I stood there huffing. The wine tasters, who were all seated in

under a stone ledge. "The cake is getting wet," one of them yelped. Raspberry juice was running out from under the makeshift lid as rain blew in. I slung my raincoat over the pot.

"Can you bring the cake to us under here?" someone else asked. "NO," I yelled, and they all were quiet.

Toward the end of the trip, I was running out of inspiration, patience, and ingredients, but

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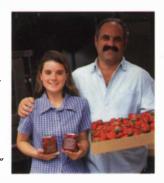


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# Preserving tradition

"Every batch of fruit has a different water content," says Albert Katz, pictured here with his daughter, Simone. "The thermometer doesn't tell me what I need to know. That's where the art comes in—knowing by feel when the preserves are at the proper setting point."



The sole ingredients for making traditional fruit preserves are fresh fruit and just enough sugar to literally preserve the fruit—you'll find no added pectin, fructose, or concentrated juices. Additives mean less monitoring to ensure proper texture, but they compromise the flavor, says preserver Albert Katz. "That's what's worth the bother," he says. "Feeling and looking at every batch for the proper setting point." Traditional preservers, like Katz & Company in California's Napa Valley, buy only fresh, peak-of-theseason fruit that's been hand-picked at local farms.



Macerating berries in sugar draws out their juices. Working in small batches allows preservers more control over moisture content.



Timing is everything. Fruit that isn't cooked long enough won't set; cooked too long, the preserves taste like burnt caramel.



Handmade preserves have an intensity all their own, full of concentrated fruit flavor. They contain far less sugar than jams or jellies and "should tast like a mouthful of the fruit itself," say the Katzes.

